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**THE SCOPE & PURPOSE OF TOWN PLANNING IN BRITAIN**

**The experience of the second Town Planning Act, 1919 to 1933**

**VOLUME I**

**A Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Open University**

**by**

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## ABSTRACT

Title: The Scope and Purpose of Town Planning in Britain: The  
experience of the Second Town Planning Act, 1919 to 1933

The broad aim of this study is to develop a greater understanding of modern British Town Planning by examining, in depth, its operation during the 1920s and early 1930s, i.e. the period of the Second Town Planning Act.

Two main themes are explored; the ideology of town planning and, the practical achievements of the activity. These are studied in their national context and in several empirical studies of events on Teesside and in Hartlepool.

The ideology of town planning is seen to be dominated by the notion of consensus. This is seen as part of a wider process in British political life. Such a notion fitted into the view of town planning as a non-political, technical activity. In practice, it is demonstrated that consensus was rarely achieved and dominant landowning forces usually achieved their ends in any conflict over land-use with the aid of the Ministry of Health.

The practical achievements of town planning in this period are generally portrayed as weak and of little interest. This study demonstrates that although the scope of town planning was deliberately limited it was reasonably successful in meeting its objectives. The experience of town planning by growing numbers of local authorities in the 1920s and early 1930s helped to lay the foundation of modern town planning. Without this experience it is doubtful if the accomplishments of town planning in the 1940s and 1950s would have been possible.

Whilst the experience of town planning between 1919 and 1933 is seen to be much richer and more important than commonly realised the scope and purpose of the activity is seen as limited from the outset by narrow political objectives.

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## PREFACE

- \* Aims of the Study
- \* Methodology
- \* Source Material
- \* Structure of the Thesis

## AIMS OF THE STUDY

This study aims at deepening our knowledge and understanding of modern town planning by critically examining its role and practice during the course of the second Town Planning Act, 1919 to 1933. The general view is taken that historical studies can assist in the comprehension of contemporary social and political problems.

Town planning has been beset by a crisis of confidence and identity for many years. This has been reflected in both public attitudes and professional concern. Part of the explanation for such a crisis may lie in the lack of appreciation of the historic role and purpose of town planning in our social system. A lack of understanding about the limitations imposed upon town planning by dominant class interests may have led to an unreal expectation of outcomes, especially from within the ranks of professional town planners. The gearing of an ideology to suit those limitations may also have been imperfectly understood by practitioners and public alike. The rhetoric of town planners has always tended to fall short of actual delivery displaying both a desire for social reform as the *raison d'etre* of town planning and a lack of appreciation that town planning was required to serve the fundamental needs of regulating land-use and development in the interests of industry and other developers. The ideology of town planning rooted in notions of compromise, consensus and the activity as an apolitical technical function, so dominant in the post Second World War years, has masked the true nature of power and influence in our society.

This study attempts to address this issue by focussing on what is seen as the root years of contemporary town planning. It is a widely held view both from within the town planning profession and outside, that modern British town planning starts essentially in the 1940s and



particularly from the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. It is usually this so-called 'golden age' of town planning which provides the contrasting point to subsequent experience.

Such a view misses the fact that statutory town planning was established in Britain in 1909 and that by 1947 there had been nearly four decades of local town planning practice. Whilst the 1947 Act and the linked legislation of the 1940s made town planning far more comprehensive and in many ways more effective, it did not represent a radical departure from previous purpose, procedure or basic legal tenets. The 1909 Act had established the framework of British town planning in terms of broad principles. Subsequent legislation added to this rather than altered it until it reached its most comprehensive form in the 1940s. The significance of the second Town Planning Act of 1919 consisted in its much more widespread adoption by local authorities so that by the end of the Act's operation in 1933, 742 authorities were involved in some stage of statutory town planning in England and Wales. For most local authorities their first experience of town planning was the 1919 Act and it follows that it was also the initiation into town planning for most landowners, householders and businessmen. Thus one reason why the 1919 Act has been chosen as the focus of this study is because it provided the first general experience of statutory town planning in Britain. The Act lasted in its operation from 1919 to 1933 providing 14 years of uninterrupted practice. The first Town Planning Act by contrast was not only much less commonly used (only 107 authorities in England and Wales) but was also disrupted by the First World War.

The period covered by the second Town Planning Act embraces the whole of the 1920s and the early 1930s, which is a formative period in so

many fields of British and international life, framing many of the reference points for political, economic and social developments in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. There is also a current interest in the inter-war years with the return in a new context of several aspects of policy and social phenomena such as monetarism, high unemployment and trade union/state conflict. There is, therefore, some merit in considering how town planning fared in the face of this similar context.

It was also the age when the foundation stones of a consensus ideology were hewn and put in place. The study period begins with the hopes of reconstruction embodied in the slogan 'homes fit for heroes', moves into the slump of the 1920s with its sharp industrial clashes and mass unemployment, and ends with the beginnings of a managed economy and some new growth. Town planning reflected all these changes to varying degrees. In particular it took on the ideals of reformism and consensus. To plan was seen as seeking improvement and efficiency through management and control which implied joint interests and common goals. As town planning extended at local government level through the medium of local authorities and joint town planning committees the subtle elements of a consensus approach to governance came to be experienced throughout Britain.

The experience of the 1920s and early 1930s were, however, only a precursor of what was to come. Consensus and planning in its widest sense were undercurrents. Town planning practice was still weak and fragmented. This was to be so throughout the 1930s. It wasn't until the war years that the social and political log-jam was broken up, giving scope to the ideas on planning that had been welling up in the decades before. Town and Country Planning took its place as part of the new managed approach to the social and economic life of the country,

that was a necessity in war-time and was then carried over into the post-war reconstruction era. Successive post-war governments maintained a consensus on key policy areas in what can now be seen as Britain's 'historic compromise'. To a considerable extent the crisis of town planning today is due to the erosion of this 'historic compromise'. New politics based on ending consensus, pose a serious problem for a profession whose roots are located deep within such an ideology.

While many of these issues can be tackled by a fresh analysis of factors affecting town planning at central government level the fact remains that town planning was a local government activity. In order to gain a proper insight into the nature of town planning in the inter-war years it is necessary to examine in detail what actually happened in local areas. This study, therefore, seeks to bring to bear the local experience of town planning as important evidence to support or deny broader generalisations about the scope, purpose and progress of British Town Planning in the 1920s and early 1930s.

The aims of this study can be summarised into two main objectives, within each of which can be identified central themes. These are set out below:

AIM A : To assess the role and purpose of Town Planning in Britain between 1919 and 1933

THEME A : The ideology of Town Planning and the notion of Consensus to the broader philosophical currents at work in society at the time.

AIM B : To examine the progress of Town Planning in Britain between 1919 and 1933 at both national and local government levels.

THEME B : The success and/or failure of town planning  
practice in terms of both explicit and implicit  
objectives.



## METHODOLOGY

The approach of this study is to seek to deepen the knowledge and understanding of modern town planning by advancing a number of hypothetical propositions which are then assessed by analysing secondary material and undertaking empirical studies of hitherto unused local records.

The hypothetical statements constitute a broad theoretical model about the role and scope of town planning in a market economy. Whilst the central thrust of this study is an historical one, the findings are seen to have relevance to contemporary town planning. In many ways the key underlying features of the society in which town planning operated in the 1920s and early 1930s have not altered in drastic fashion.

That said, there are important factors of change over the past 50 years which do provide different structural and policy contexts. The study, therefore, has to be seen as primarily one of British town planning in the inter-war years, but with, hopefully, illuminating explanations applicable to today's conditions as well.

In considering the nature of British society the theoretical model adopted for this study derives largely from a marxist view of the state and of class relations. But where appropriate pluralist explanations of power are also taken into account. The view is held that the marxist model offers the best available explanation of the main sources of power in a market-oriented society. Other perspectives, such as those resting on pluralist or managerialist concepts, are seen as offering valuable insights into the details and subtleties of power. But this does not mean to say that this is a heavily theoretical work or one that attempts to chart new theoretical frontiers. The propositions constitute a view of town planning as an aspect of



governance and as such reflective of the forces which determine the distribution of power in society. In many ways the study is concerned to consolidate this view of town planning rather than to provide insights into the specifics of how and why the capitalist class determined upon such a policy.

The empirical work is based upon a number of local studies drawn from the Teesside and Hartlepool areas. It is not claimed that Teesside or Hartlepool constituted a microcosm of the situation nationally. All local areas in Britain had unique features which together provided the overall experience. But each local area in Britain also contained common factors so that conclusions drawn on the basis of local studies do provide material that can be used for general analysis. It is necessary to recognise that local studies such as those in this work provide, essentially, illuminations and more local studies from different areas are required to give fresh insights and to affirm or challenge the conclusions from Teesside and Hartlepool. The history and character of the localities chosen for study are outlined at the appropriate point in the study but it is important to stress at the beginning that Teesside and Hartlepool possess a rather broader set of experiences than might be thought to be the case. Whilst the communities are set in a predominantly industrial context that does not mean that rural experiences were absent. The ambience may be essentially northern working class but the local power-elite were representative of strata that dominated all local government at this time, viz., small businessmen, shopkeepers and landowners. The local economic base was rooted in heavy manufacturing. Thus the newer electrical and consumer-based product industries were (and still are) under-represented, but the general impression of the area as one of the depressed areas of Britain is over-simplified. Major growth industries

also had their place, notably the rising chemical giant of ICI in Billingham. Many of the issues which characterised national town planning activity in the period 1919 to 1933 were present in Teesside and Hartlepool. The main inadequately represented issue was undoubtedly the lack of development pressures on the countryside and the call for Green Belt policies. But since this study is not concerned to provide a comprehensive look at all the aspects of town planning practice this is not a major drawback. The local studies are used primarily to examine the themes of conflict and consensus, success and failure as a way of testing out the hypothetical statements concerning the scope, purpose and resultant ideology of town planning in the study period.

## SOURCES

All the source materials of this study are listed as references at the end of each chapter and summarised in a Bibliography. This section seeks to identify the main areas of source material and to point to some of the problems experienced in their use.

The general material deployed to set the national scene for town planning in the 1920s and early 1930s covers a wide range of primary and secondary sources. They can be summarised as follows:

- Government legislation, reports etc.
- Historical studies of the period
- Contemporary reports and surveys of the period
- Town Planning studies, historiographical works
- Contemporary town planning works, journals, reports, schemes
- Contemporary planning material, books, articles, manifestos etc.
- Linked political and theoretical studies, contemporary and subsequent

The main problem associated with this material has been one of selectivity. There is a very wide range of such material and it was essential to discard all but the most relevant to the themes of the study.

The local source material also posed problems of selectivity but in addition contained other difficulties concerning clarity and comprehensiveness. The main references used were:

- Printed minutes of joint committees and Borough and District Councils
- Local Authority files containing agendas, reports and correspondence

- Local maps and plans
- Statutory town planning schemes and stages of such schemes
- Contemporary newspaper records
- Local historical studies
- Interviews
- Central Government records of local schemes and associated issues

Generally there is a wealth of local material, much of it held in County Council Archives, but some still in the possession of the individual local authorities. The Public Record Office at Kew, London, also contains a mass of information on local planning schemes and the relationship between central and local authorities. These records can provide valuable insights into wider relationships with objectors to schemes. There are, however, inevitable gaps in records over 50 years old. The issues selected for inclusion in this study from the local empirical research have been as thoroughly researched as possible but could not cover every 'angle'. One particular problem encountered by these local studies concerns the problem of locating the relevant maps prepared in the course of undertaking town planning schemes. Map material is particularly vulnerable since it is often bulky and difficult to store. As a consequence many of the Teesside and Hartlepool maps no longer exist locally. The Record Office in London generally contain the maps deposited with the Ministry of Health at the appropriate stages of a scheme. But this presents a considerable problem for the local researcher who ideally requires to study the maps side by side with the written material. This did not prove to be the sort of problem which prevented a proper understanding of the issues but was a limiting factor in certain instances.



It would also have been desirable to obtain first hand accounts of the town planning experience of the period. Unfortunately this proved virtually impossible. Most, if not all, of the dramatis personae had long since died. Only those who were relatively young in the period, 1919 to 1933, survive and their record is not relevant to this study. One major recorded interview was undertaken with Mr. W. Bean who was appointed in 1932 to work as an assistant to Mr. G. Knowles, the Town Planner appointed to undertake the South Tees Joint Town Planning Scheme. Since only a brief portion of his experience related to the study period it was not possible to introduce his testimony in any direct way. But the interview did provide valuable background 'feel'.

It was also hoped to use the records of local industrial concerns, notably ICI. Despite considerable probing it appeared that much of the company's files, maps and other material had been destroyed. This does not mean that the position of the company cannot be discerned in other ways. Many of the letters of the company survive in local authority records and in Ministry of Health files. Nevertheless, the lack of background company material is a weakness. The records of Dorman Long Company are, however, still largely extant and held in Teesside in the British Steel Archives section of Steel House. Where relevant this source has been used to illustrate the company's stance.



## STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

Following this Preface the study is structured into six main Parts. The first Part sets out the theoretical platform for the study, outlining the conceptual approach and the key assumptions made concerning political power, ideology and the nature of the state. This Part ends with a set of hypothetical statements which constitute the areas of inquiry with which this study is concerned.

The next two Parts look at the context for Town Planning. Part 2 considers the long-run historical context for statutory town planning and aims to establish the political and philosophical currents that town planning carried in its luggage from the nineteenth century into the twentieth. Part 3 identifies the most significant features of social, economic and political change that framed the reference points for the second Town Planning Act and the way that Act and its associated legislation was used in Britain.

The fourth Part looks at the objectives set for town planning during the 1920s and early 1930s by the Town Planning Movement, political parties and the statutory instruments. These objectives are then subject to a study to measure how effectively they were met.

The fifth Part provides the local perspective and contains the bulk of the empirical evidence used to examine the way town planning operated in practice. Following a presentation of the characteristics of the area and the local town planning scene, experience is examined in the context of the two themes, 'consensus/conflict' and 'success/failure'. These two themes are treated separately for clarity but they are closely interrelated as are the issues chosen to illustrate the two themes.

Finally, the concluding Part draws together the local and general material and addresses the main aim of the study which is to assess the scope and purpose of town planning within what is seen as a capitalist society and to present the relevance of such findings to a more general understanding of the place of town planning in societies largely governed by market forces.

## **PART 1**

### **THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- \* Chapter 1 - A Review of the Literature**
- \* Chapter 2 - The Theoretical Framework of the Study**
- \* Chapter 3 - The Hypotheses**

## Chapter 1 - A Review of the Literature

As is made clear in the Introduction, this work is an historical study rooted in an analysis of local experience in the implementation of town planning during the 15 years following the First World War. Through this empirical research it is hoped to shed further light on the nature of town planning in our society. Thus issues about the nature of our society and the place of town planning in it are central theoretical questions about which it is important to be as clear as possible from the outset.

This chapter is not intended to present an exhaustive review of all the recent literature in the fields of modern Planning History and Planning Theory. Rather it seeks to select those historical works that have sought to analyse the inter-war years from a town planning perspective and those Planning Theory studies which illustrate different ways of viewing the general problems raised by this thesis.

### Town Planning History

The historiography of modern British town planning has gained momentum over the past ten years. Between the publication of Ashworth's The Genesis of Modern British Town Planning,<sup>(1)</sup> in 1954 and Cherry's, The Evolution of British Town Planning,<sup>(2)</sup> twenty years later, there were very few works published on modern town planning. One might mention Benevolo's, The Origins of Modern Town Planning, 1963<sup>(3)</sup> and Creese's work, The Search for Environment, 1964<sup>(4)</sup> but both of these had specific themes. Benevolo was concerned with pre-1848 developments and Creese focussed on the Garden City.

Since 1974, however, there has been a mushrooming of works on modern town planning and a growing general interest in the subject. The

Planning History Group which began in 1974 with a handful of individuals is now well established with a widespread international membership and associated publications. In reviewing ten years of the Group in 1984, Cherry pointed out that most of the 1,400 titles, in eight topic groups, listed in Sutcliffe's annotated bibliography, The History of Urban and Regional Planning (5) appeared during the last decade.(6) The number of publications continues to grow and the task of updating the bibliography is now probably unmanageable.

In the same article Cherry advances two main reasons to explain this remarkable growth. First, he suggests that the loss of primacy within the planning profession from the design to social science disciplines led to a whole new context of enquiry. Under the old dispensation town planning was seen as essentially an art and design process and its history judged accordingly. The new social science thrust sought to place planning in the context of either a function of government, or as a movement, ideology, or set of methodologies. These new approaches held a dynamism which fuelled new speculations about the nature of town planning and a reassessment of its history. The second factor advanced by Cherry lay in the growth in planning education, itself a reflection of the expansion in planning practice in the 1960s and 1970s. The increase in educational resources devoted to town planning also led to an expansion of academic enquiry, including historical studies.

To these a third factor can be added which is related to the seeming impasse into which town planning practice has driven since the 1960s. It is possible to view the history of statutory town planning in this country in three main phases. In the first period the practice was being established, say from 1909 to 1943; in the second period a comprehensive system operated and held general legitimacy, say from,



1943 to the 1960s; in the third and current period, since the early 1960s there have been no clear political remits for town planning, doubts exist about its purpose, and there is a general lack of public interest.

Given this current situation there is a clear need for re-assessment. Much of the concern for deepening our historical knowledge for modern British Town Planning may well stem from the critical reception of town planning over recent years. At best it has represented a desire to discover what went wrong, at worst a retreat into mere academicism.

### Inter-War Town Planning History

Within the general growth of interest in the way town planning has evolved in this country there has been a developing interest in the inter-war years. However, there has been no single study of British town planning between the wars and in many ways this thesis attempts to chart a new in-depth approach to town planning practice in this period. Ashworth, 1954 and Cherry, 1974 remain the key texts of twentieth century British town planning practice and as such are reviewed here. In addition, mention is also made of Sheail's book, 'Rural Conservation in Inter-War Britain, 1981<sup>(7)</sup> since its concerns and period provide an interesting reference point to this study. Ward's work on inter-war planning is also discussed. Biographical studies and town studies are not considered here although their contribution to our overall knowledge of town planning is recognised. Biographies of leading town planning figures of the twentieth century has noticeably increased in the last few years. One may cite, Cherry's edited volume, Pioneers in British Planning, 1981<sup>(8)</sup>, which dealt with Adams, Pepler, Geddes, Unwin, Abercrombie, Sharp, Osborn and Buchanan. Recent years have also seen works by Jackson 1985<sup>(9)</sup> on Unwin, Simpson's study of Thomas Adams, 1985<sup>(10)</sup> and Cherry and Penny on Holford, 1986.<sup>(11)</sup>

## Ashworth & Cherry

It is a characteristic of both Ashworth, 1954 and Cherry, 1974 that the theoretical framework of their books are largely implicit. Even where, as in Ashworth, the aim of the work is clearly stated there is no attempt to justify the premises. Thus,

"It's aim (i.e. the book, D.G.)... is to try to discover why there has gradually arisen a widespread public demand that town planning should be adopted as one of the normal functions of public activity." (12)

The central premise here is that public demand creates public policy and that town planning became the object of clear popular demand. Such an explanation does not take account of other particular interests in society which may have desired town planning. It also takes a rather simplified view about how policy decisions are arrived at. Ashworth gives recognition to the social and economic context in which social ideas are born but not to how class and power in society limit or permit such ideas. It must be assumed that Ashworth believes that Government policy essentially reflects popular will. Thus, his argument would seem to run, town planning exists because the public want it and the public wants it because historically the social movement which argued for town planning captured the hearts and minds of the people. Assumptions about the nature of the state and the distribution of power, of the nature of class relations and other aspects that make up our industrial society are unclear. It might be supposed that in many ways the assumptions are not too dissimilar to those of the planning profession generally.

Cherry's central concern was to give greater focus to twentieth century town planning developments, compared to Ashworth's coverage of both the

nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Within his more detailed remit Cherry sought to emphasise the role of professional town planning by highlighting the statutory town planning process, the role of key individuals and the part played by the Royal Town Planning Institute. Cherry saw the growth of planning to be stimulated by a movement,

"...a complex movement embracing civic design, housing improvement and social reform stemmed from a context of economic, political and social factors."(13)

The work is essentially descriptive and deals with the various threads of influence with clarity. But as in Ashworth there is little attention paid to setting out assumptions from the outset. In truth, Cherry modestly points out that

"the book does not claim to unlock great secrets in the history of planning but rather to present the basic material collected and organised for ease of understanding of the present position."(14)

This it does admirably but as with Ashworth the agenda is set by the underlying ideas of the author. These ideas are more explicitly stated in the conclusion to the book when Cherry speculates on the future of town planning. In general the tone of the conclusion is buoyant and optimistic reflecting a belief in planning as a rational activity which is bound to continue because it is sensible practice,

"But town planning is likely to continue for some time its existing role of instigator in the government system, if only for the reason that it is the only academic and professional discipline which seeks to offer the much needed basis of understanding the inter-relationships in our urban and regional

system. Add to this its practice of design skills, and land use and developmental management, and one has a formidable pool of expertise, which it would be foolish to dismantle or disperse."(15)

Cherry, like Ashworth, views society as essentially pluralist in structure and is more explicit about this,

"Society gets the sort of planning that it wants, and there is no certainty that any desired style will last for very long. It may be that planning will revert to a former type in future years. It is, for example, by no means implausible to speculate that consensus values will be rediscovered in our pluralist society, or that public demands will be made for simple explanations rather than complex uncertainties." (16)

When it comes to making judgements about inter-war planning, there is an interesting divergence of view, marginal but significant. Ashworth is generally rather scathing about inter-war progress,

"On the whole the changes made after the first world war in the basis of statutory town planning were useful but slight."(17)

His broader view is that there was evidence of a change in attitude among the practitioners and supporters of planning but that the thrust of central government policy saw little change from pre-war days. Ashworth's overall opinion of statutory town planning is expressed thus,

"Town and Country planning became a separate governmental function because it treated problems which were real and recognisable but otherwise untouched; in its early stages statutory town planning was obviously a failure because it did



little more than pretend to do this: in actual fact it merely acted as a decorative appendage to the treatment of related but not identical problems by other means. When it abandoned the pretence and adhered to the reality the story of its genesis was over." (18)

Cherry takes a much more balanced view of the inter-war years seeing the legislative achievements of 1919 and 1932 as marks of progress for a 'tender plant'. But in particular Cherry notes the 'advance' made in ideas,

"...the idea of planning took shape as a rational, eminently sensible and a political solution to many of democracy's problems." (19)

"A different slant to professionalism was taken up - the apolitical, rational common-sense protection of the public interest." (20)

The essential difference between the two authors is that for Ashworth town planning was not born in any real sense until after the Second World War, whereas, Cherry stresses the important evolution of town planning from its beginnings. The roots of these different outlooks may largely reside in the different period in which they were writing. Ashworth wrote his work in the early 1950s when the predominant view was that Britain led the world with its town planning procedures and its reconstruction work. There was a tendency in that period to see the world as, 'pre-war-bad', 'post-war-enlightened'. The consensus that pervaded the atmosphere of Ashworth's time had largely evaporated by the time Cherry came to write his book. The perceived failures of town planning efforts in the 1960s and early 1970s had by then led to



a growing critical appraisal of both the 1947 procedures and the planning ideas and attitudes associated with that era. In this more divided and uncertain context there was a need to try and establish continuities and links with the past. In his 1974 work elements of that approach can be seen in Cherry's arguments and style.

Despite their differences both Ashworth and Cherry's work lie within a traditional, liberal view of history which accepts pluralist notions of power. In both cases the main task is to describe rather than to explain events. Since 1974 when Cherry's book was published and the Planning History Group was founded there have been some noticeable shifts in the orientation of planning history studies. There is now much more concern to explain as well as to describe. There is also a desire to be more explicit about theoretical starting points. Both of these developments have perhaps been largely due to the influence of marxist or neo-marxist historians who have placed new issues on the agenda. This in turn has led to more debates about the nature of historical enquiry and a new vigour in pluralist explanations.

#### Sheail & Ward

Traditional views still flourish and make significant contributions to knowledge. The descriptive and empirical method is pronounced in John Sheail's book, Rural Conservation in Inter-War Britain, 1981.

The interest in Sheail's work is that he has charted new territory by looking in depth at the role of local government in a key policy area - conservation. His empirical thrust parallels this thesis although case studies are less pronounced in Sheail's work. Sheail makes the point that planning historians have tended to give short shrift to the activities of individual local authorities. (21)

In dealing with statutory town planning in the inter-war years Sheail is far less critical than either Ashworth or Cherry. In his view,

"...the planning acts were both practical and ingenious in the way in which they conferred legal respectability on the regulations imposed on land use, whilst allowing a large measure of flexibility in their interpretation and implementation." (22)

This view will be the subject of further analysis in this study.

S.V. Ward's work is of particular interest because of the focus on planning between the wars. In his unpublished doctoral thesis, Approaches to Public Intervention in Shaping the Urban Environment, 1919-1939, 1984, (23) and in recent articles, (24) Ward's central concern is to gain fresh insights into the uneven way in which local authorities have been able to shape the urban environment. His approach is to advance the thesis that the basic character of intervention by the state was largely determined by structural economic considerations. Ward's theoretical approach is essentially a marxist or neo-marxist one. But it is rooted in empirical research. In his doctoral thesis Ward takes five case studies of big cities to test out his thesis. His area of concern is not limited to land use planning but to the field of local government development and spending. Ward's general conclusion is that the key determinant to spending and to the way the local state affected the environment was the economic position of the local authority rather than any political or professional factors. Ward's work is valuable in seeking to explain how Government grants and loans were distributed between local authorities. But it is less satisfactory when considering why it operated this way. Indeed all the main historical work on modern town planning has tended to ignore the 'why' question. This study seeks to shed some light on this issue. The approach of writers concerned with Town Planning Theory should provide important material for any historical enquiry into the

purpose of town planning and this issue is discussed in the second half of this chapter.

### Town Planning Theory

The growth in town planning historiography has been paralleled by a similar rise in interest in Town Planning Theory, or more generally, Planning Theory, and for much the same reasons. Mounting uncertainties about the scope and purpose of town planning in the 1960s fuelled new thinking on methodologies which in turn prompted examinations into what constituted the activity and study of town planning.

The perceived failure of the blue-print, design-led approach to town planning during the period 1947 to 1964 led to the introduction of new techniques and approaches which were seen by their advocates as scientific and rational. This school of thought attempted to challenge the old orthodoxy by presenting these ideas as new theory. Examples of this changing perception of planning are J.B. McLoughlin's, Urban and Regional Planning, 1969 (25) and G. Chadwick's, A Systems View of Planning, 1971. (26) These works provided the launchpad for a variety of more detailed works which sought to establish a new science-based mathematical technique which at that stage did not advance any theoretical conclusions but rested on the standpoint of planning as a rational process. A. Faludi in his book, Planning Theory, 1973 (27) sought to generalise from the experience of the 'systems' writers and others and develop a more fully drawn-out exposition of planning as a rational, comprehensive process. A professional implication that arose in the course of debating these new approaches was the question, 'what constitutes professional town planning practice?'. This issue had already surfaced in the mid-1960s when increasing numbers of social science based planners had sought to extend concern to the social as well as the physical fabric of society.



A furious argument broke out within the ranks of the professional Town Planning Institute as to just what should constitute a chartered town planner. (28) That debate was never satisfactorily resolved, as indeed it couldn't be, because there is no definitive answer. Instead the questions altered.

Arguments about appropriate procedure for planning appeared to many to be fruitless because it ignored the political context in which the activity took place. Attention was drawn to the need to establish the appropriate linkages between planning, power and urban change. Drawing upon the traditional analytical tools of sociology a number of writers began to look at these new questions and sought to assess the role of town planning in society. Dennis, 1970, (29) Pahl, 1970 (30) and Davies, 1972 (31) were all examples of this developing trend.

But the lack of theoretical rigour in such analyses or the absence of any acknowledgement of a theoretical base led to new critiques from writers using marxian analysis. These in turn have been criticised for their over-attention to theoretical issues without testing out suppositions with empirical research. They have also been criticised for a failure to distinguish town planning and for not being prescriptive.

Although issues about Planning Theory have not been drawn tightly around political questions, that is where the main energy is currently devoted and it also has the most relevance to this thesis. This is not to discount the continuing contributions of either the design-orientated planners or the advocates of procedure theory. Both have helped to illuminate other stances and throw valuable light on the ideology of planners. But much confusion still reigns among those trying to clarify Town Planning Theory as can be seen in the work of



the Education for Planning Association which has held important conferences in 1973, 1976 and 1981 on the question of Planning Theory. The 1981 Conference has been recorded in a collection of papers given at that Conference entitled, 'Planning Theory : Prospects for the 1980s', 1982 (32) edited by Patsy Healey, Glen McDougall and Michael Thomas. In the position paper given by the editors seven supposed theoretical positions were identified on the question of explaining planning.

- (a) procedural planning theory;
- (b) Incrementalism and other decision-making methodologies;
- (c) implementation and policy;
- (d) social planning and advocacy planning;
- (e) the political economy approach;
- (f) the new humanism approach, and finally
- (g) pragmatism.

Eric Reade, in 'The Theory of Town and Country Planning', (33) an essay in the same volume, takes Healey, McDougall and Thomas' analysis to task and effectively demolishes it. He identifies the crucial point that not all the seven positions are theoretical positions. Many are either prescriptive, assertive or theory in an embryonic form. For Reade none of the positions identified have actually been applied in the sense of using the theoretical frameworks for an explanation of town and country planning in Britain. For Reade, as for others like McDougall and Blowers in the same volume, the marxist position comes closest to a useful theoretical tool for explaining social processes and state activities such as town planning but its lack of direct application to analysing what has actually occurred in historic terms is seen to detract from its value. Reade also criticises the marxist

or neo-marxist school for its failure to distinguish between the state as developer and the state as regulator through its planning control mechanisms. Planners, asserts Reade, only control development they do not undertake it.

These critiques certainly need to be taken seriously. Within the British tradition there has been a heavy concentration on discovering the marxist stance, e.g. Harvey 1973 (34) and exploring aspects of capitalist reproduction, e.g. Cooke 1983, (35) as well as seeking to develop an understanding of the land market and patterns of land ownership, e.g. Massey and Catalano, 1978(36). These works have tended to be highly theoretical and to lack empirical scholarship. But the criticism is not quite so valid when considering the contribution of the French marxists operating within the Althusserian framework. Castells, 1977 (37) based his studies on Dunkirk and Olives 1976(38) on Paris. Some British Studies, using a marxist analysis, although not necessarily a structuralist one, have used empirical work to explore their theses. Cynthia Cockburn, for instance, looked at Lambeth in the course of her work, 'The Local State', 1977 (39) and more recently Cliff Hague considered events in Edinburgh to back up his ideas in, The Development of Planning Thought: A Critical Perspective, 1985(40)

The need to test out explanations as to the role and scope of town planning through empirical research is not confined to one school of thought and it would provide a welcome addition to debate if those who held alternative positions on the nature of the economy, the state and power in society were to undertake more field and historical studies. A recent example of such an approach is J. Simmie's, 'Power, Property and Corporatism', 1981 (41) which seeks to provide a rigorous theoretical analysis of power and property relations from the standpoint of a Weberian analysis and the notion of the state as

Corporatist. Simmie undertakes a detailed case study of development in Oxford over several decades. Blowers, in 'The Limits of Power' 1980 (42) employs a different technique by seeking to subject a range of alternative explanations of planning, politics and power to a study of local planning policies in Bedfordshire in the 1970's and then to reach conclusions.

### Town Planning & Concepts of Power

Blowers, 1982, has stated,

"What is required is a theoretical framework which relates the concept of planning to the concept of power for it is this concept which provides planning with its role, its motivation and its justification. The study of power relationships in planning has been a curiously neglected area and has tended to focus on a narrow definition of power rather than using power as the central concept in the explanation of planning policies and outcomes." (43)

This establishes an agenda that is quite different from many previous starting points. Blowers is not arguing against utilising concepts of power developed in explaining broader social processes but suggests that they need to be applied to planning situations to empirically test their merits as analytical tools. The tools that can be brought to bear have been well explored. Marx, Weber, Durkheim and other social analysts have provided a wealth of starting points that have been, and are being, constantly reassessed, added to and refined. Gwyneth Kirk in, 'Urban Planning in a Capitalist Society', 1980 (44) has provided a valuable recording of various theoretical positions regarding planning and power. Although categorisations can be too restrictive and lead to over-simplification they can also help to make



sense out of a complex picture. Kirk's categorisations operate in an hierarchical fashion, working from the broad interpretations of the nature of the economy to the various typologies of the way planners act in practice. Kirk's own standpoint is a marxist one and this is reflected clearly in both her general approach as to what is important and what is not, and in her conclusions regarding the nature of contemporary society in Britain and the role and purpose of land-use planning. Whether or not one agrees with her standpoint her attempt to structure the debate about planning theory is useful and apposite to this study.

### The Nature of British Society

In discussing the nature of contemporary British society Kirk seeks a classification based upon the way positions are taken on the economy and discerns three main typologies; mixed economy; capitalist economy; and corporatist economy.

The notion of Britain as a mixed economy has had a powerful current of support since the end of the Second World War when Attlee's Labour Government introduced a number of nationalisation measures and widened the welfare state. These changes induced many to consider that capitalism had been effectively ended and replaced by something new that was neither capitalist nor socialist. Anthony Crosland, in particular, from a Labour perspective sought to conceptualise this new 'mixed-economy' society in his, 'The Future of Socialism', 1956 (45) and 'The Future of the Left', 1960.(46) Kirk emphasises the post-war nature of these theoretical statements but ignores the historical roots of such positions which were effectively laid down in the inter-war years. The post-war 'compromise' encapsulated in the phrase, 'Butskellism', (derived from the Conservative and Labour Chancellors of



the Exchequer in the late 1950s, Rab. Butler and Hugh Gaitskell), had been anticipated by the writings and ideas of Harold Macmillan 1933, 1938, (47) A. Salter, 1932 (48) Hugh Dalton, 1935 (49) and Evan Durbin, 1940. (50) American influence was also at work and the contributions from the disillusioned Trotskyist, J. Burnham, 1941 (51) and the anti-ideologist, D. Bell, 1960 (52) helped to fuel the idea that a new form of society had been created in the USA and Britain which was on the way to being class-less and governed by rationalism and managerialism. These notions, as we shall explore later in this study, were already underpinning the emerging professional town planning ideology of the inter-war years. In recent years, with the return of mass unemployment and the onset of bitter strikes in the 1970s and 1980, there has been less emphasis on the 'mixed-economy' and the 'end of ideology' notions and a renewed interest in re-defining marxist notions of political economy. A number of critical works on the mixed-economy position by Blackburn, 1967, 1972 (53), Miliband, 1969 (54), Broadbent, 1977 (55) and Westergaard, 1972 (56) have helped to reinstate the view that Britain remains a capitalist economy. The third position identified by Kirk has had less profile than the other two but deserves a separate category because it does underpin other subsequent theoretical positions, particularly concerning notions about the relationship of professional town planners to the state. The Corporatist position in this country is primarily identified with Pahl, 1977 (57) and Winkler, 1977 (58) who have argued that the growth in the power of the state has resulted in the economy being directed and controlled by the state on behalf of vague objectives such as 'nationalism', 'order', 'success' and 'unity'. More recently J. Simmie, as already mentioned, has sought to add greater theoretical and empirical weight to this position in his study of land-use planning policies in the context of Oxford. (59)

## The Distribution of Power

Kirk identifies four theoretical positions that are concerned directly or indirectly with providing explanations about the distribution of power in society. These perspectives relate to established social science positions and are, pluralist; public bureaucracy; reformist and marxist. Within contemporary debates in the social sciences, as well as those concerned with town planning theory, the two main competing notions are the pluralist and marxist concepts. Pluralists maintain that power in British society is diffused and therefore no one group dominates decision-making and government. Underlying the pluralist notion is the view that power is obtained through the electoral process and by exerting social pressure and influence. For marxists the question of power is linked strongly to the question of who owns and controls the wealth and productive forces of the economy, rather than who wins an election or exerts influence through social networks or lobbies. Marxists do not deny the part played by elections and other social processes but assert that 'real' power in terms of making key decisions on finance, the economy, investment and general world relations etc., are made by and on behalf of the capitalist class who continue to own and direct the major part of economic and financial resources. Variations in these positions are considerable. Within the marxist current there is much debate about the emphasis given to the base of the society compared to its superstructure, that is, the economic structure compared to the social and cultural institutions and legacies that help to shape social and political responses and hence help to define power. Here the battle between the 'structuralist' followers of Louis Althusser and those who adhere to A. Gramsci has been fierce.

The idea that primary power lies in the hands of a public bureaucracy has, been the implicit theoretical position of those writers like Dennis, 1972 (60), Davies, 1972 (61) and Rex and Moore, 1967 (62) who stressed the part played by local and national officials in the determination of urban policy outcomes. As a standpoint it lacks the rigour and body of opinion that the other positions hold. To place it on the same par as the other two theories is perhaps to over-evaluate it. A similar criticism can be made of the final position defined by Kirk, Reformism. Kirk appears to fall into the trap of elevating a broad political set of prescriptions into a theory. It is noticeable in seeking to locate the theory no clear alternative explanation of power is forthcoming.

#### The Organisational Context of Planning

The organisational context within which urban planning takes place can be seen in terms of; the professional; the administrative; and the role of the state. Within this rather uneasy framework Kirk subjects a variety of views on the nature of the planning process such as, planning as rational decision-making, as disjointed incrementalism, as goal-oriented and as systems-gearred, to a useful analysis. Of particular note is the valuable critique made of the notions that planning is and can be value-free, neutral and a science-like technique. This view of town planning and planning generally has been at the root of a powerful current of thinking that has tended to dominate town planning ideology ever since the inter-war years. Within the administrative context Kirk notes the role played by public servants in advancing notions of corporate planning on the grounds of efficiency and comprehensiveness.



It is interesting that a discussion on the role of the state should be placed at this point in Kirk's general analysis. In many ways how one views the nature of the state will flow from previous starting points concerning of the nature of the economy and the explanation of power in society. Kirk links the various positions on the state back to standpoints on the economy and power recognising that the one informs the other.

### The Role of the Planner

Finally Kirk looks at the way various authors have depicted the role of planners in our society and identifies four main roles; planners as managers; as advocates; as reformers; and as state agents.

While these categories help to identify different perspectives on the activity of planning in our society they are not exclusive. Indeed it is possible to hold the view that planners can act in all four roles - at the same time! A planner working for a Labour local authority may be seen to act as an agent of the state in a broad sense, yet operate limited reforms in the context of local political policy whilst managing local land-use arrangement within professional contexts and in his/her spare time offering services to the local community through 'planning aid'. Of course there can be and are conflicts between these roles at certain times and how one explains outcomes will tend to be determined by theoretical standpoints.

Running through all of Kirk's layers of analysis are clear threads linking the different positions at each level. Thus for marxists the character of contemporary society is governed by capitalistic relationships, the state is primarily an instrument of capitalist class rule, the role of planning is to ensure capitalism maintains its hegemony and that decisions are made in the interest of the capitalist



class and planners can therefore be seen essentially as state agents. For those who believe in a mixed economy analysis the state is generally seen as neutral or effecting a balance of power. Classes in the marxist sense are either denied or seen as irrelevant to the real picture which is one of multiple social gradations, groupings and power blocks and within this tradition planning can be seen as either a neutral, value-free technique to solve problems or as a means to effect reforms and improvements in the way the system is operated. Planners can be, in this view either managers, advocates or reformers. Finally those who hold a corporatist view see capitalism as subordinate to the power of the national state. The role of the planner within a dominant public bureaucracy is clearly identified, as is the concept of planner as manager.

### Conclusions

The current state of Planning Theory is confusing. Not only are there, as Reade has asserted, several bogus theories, but those that do exist have often failed to address either the nature and scope of town planning as a regulatory instrument for physical development or have not developed sufficient empirical work to test out abstract theories. There has been a growing awareness of the need to study the practice of town planning but as Reade says,

"Because town and country planning has existed as an activity of government for several generations, there has been built up a vast accretion of shared assumptions and perceptions concerning it. But precisely because its legitimation was 'premature'... these assumptions and perceptions remain unexamined." (63)

This work seeks to address this issue by looking at the roots of town

planning in the inter-war year and by examining through selected case studies what happened in practice and how far this bears out the analysis made of the role and purpose of town planning as a state activity in its earliest phase.

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## Chapter 2 - The Theoretical Framework of the Study

One of the central concerns of this study is to examine town planning as an aspect of state activity. This is not to deny that a town planning movement continued to exist whose purpose was to defend and advance the town planning approach at all levels and at all times.<sup>(1)</sup> Nor does it ignore the existence of a professional structure which gave support to the activity but was, in this period, never entirely subsumed within government structures.<sup>(2)</sup> However, these aspects of town planning are relegated and seen as supportive to the most important factor relating to town planning in the inter-war period, namely its establishment nationally and locally as a state activity. This process is seen as reflecting the needs of dominant forces in society who sought to control the increasingly complex problems of urbanisation. Town Planning can be seen as part of a wider process away from market led solutions to growing state intervention. To justify these changes new ideologies were required.

An importance focus of this study is the extent to which and the way the new town planning activity became established in practice both in Whitehall and in local government areas. In addition the study is also concerned to examine the ideological framework of town planning both as government activity and as a profession. All of these concerns raise theoretical issues about the nature of the state, the role of government and the role of ideology. It is not intended to go into a deep philosophical enquiry about any of these, but it is necessary to clarify in outline the underlying assumptions used in this study.

### The Need for Town Planning

In examining town planning as a state activity it is necessary to

consider why it became adopted by the state when it did. This issue is an underlying theme throughout the study. The origins of statutory town planning are discussed in Part 2 and the inter-war period in subsequent Parts. The most convincing explanations why the state took up town planning are seen to centre around the proposition that unregulated urbanisation in the nineteenth century had created acute crises in such areas as urban housing. This led to the need for state intervention in land-use in order to cope more efficiently and effectively with the development process. The imperatives of the of the economy, or more specifically, the problems posed by a market economy, maintained a continuing pressure for more and more state intervention throughout the study period.<sup>(3)</sup> Nor is this a uniquely British phenomenon. Similar moves to regulate land, transport and other aspects of the urban economy occurred in most of the western European states towards the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. America too experienced localised examples of urban regulation and town planning although national moves did not seriously materialise there until the period of the New Deal later in the 1930s. <sup>(4)</sup>

### The State

The role of the state is an important factor in any government activity, not least town planning. The central state machine determines the direction and implementation of government policy in various ways. Ministries are empowered to oversee the introduction of activities as determined by Parliament. This gives to the state machine considerable power. But it is not an autonomous power. The bureaucracy wields an important say in how much legislation is implemented and in what way, but it cannot initiate or secure legislation directly. That power resides in the elected government

whose directions are determined by the underlying class power ameliorated by political considerations. The view is not therefore taken that the state machine, at either national or local level, simplistically reflects dominant class interests, nor that it is an autonomous structure divorced from existing social and economic forces. Generally, and certainly in the period under consideration, the state machines were operated by officials whose background and education schooled them in values which secured the interests of the dominant class force. When, as in the case of Poplar Council in 1921, aspects of the local state appeared to be operating in favour of working class interests and therefore, threaten the status quo, then legal moves were made to remove that threat.<sup>(5)</sup> Other subtle and not so subtle mechanisms were employed by the central state machine to keep local authorities in line with government policy during the inter-war years. Ward, 1986, provides a fascinating insight into the use of secret sanctions employed by the central state during the 1930s to secure public expenditure outcomes desired by government.<sup>(6)</sup> The local state is more susceptible to reflecting local interests which may conflict with either the capitalist interest or with government policy. But invariably the central machine will win any such conflict because it is seen as the arbiter and has the residual power. This particular theme is examined in this study by examining the response of the different tiers of government to the competing claims for local land use, as witnessed in proceeding with Town Planning Schemes.

### Class in Inter-war Britain

The issue of class in the period 1919 to 1933 is not overtly examined in this study although it is an underlying notion. Whatever factors caused a shift in spending patterns and consequent social conditions it is generally agreed that fundamental changes in the class structure of



Britain were not one of them.<sup>(7)</sup> Whilst it is true that there was a change in occupations and that this altered individuals' perceptions of their position in society, this was neither so great in numbers nor so influential in quality as to alter the overall class picture. The proportion of the population owning the overwhelming percentage of the wealth hardly altered at all in the 1920s. In 1931, 1% of the population owned 69% of total wealth. By 1930 that proportion had fallen to 62%. But when analysis extends to the top 10% of the population it can be seen that most of the distribution of wealth occurred within the 'middle class'. In 1913, 10% of the population owned 92% of total wealth and this had declined to just 91% by 1930.<sup>(8)</sup> The composition of government was widely at variance with the class composition of the country at large. Parliament rarely possessed more than a quarter of Members from working class backgrounds whereas in the country as a whole three quarters of the population comprised manual workers. In Local Government there was an even greater under-representation of working people. The typical Alderman and Councillor was male, a businessman or shopkeeper and between 50 and 70 years old.<sup>(9)</sup> Similarly, few, if any, of the upper echelons of Whitehall or Town Hall officers came from working class backgrounds. An analysis of town planning activity in this period must bear these important considerations in mind. They not only put into context the question of consensus and compromise but also suggest that the general day to day ambience of the activity and its priorities were governed by a lack of awareness or concern for the working class interest.

### Ideology & Town Planning

Town planning was one of those areas where convergence and compromise between class interests was consciously sought in the 1920s and early 1930s. For their part the town planning practitioners and



professionals readily adopted the view that the activity was non-political, non-class and non-party. The town planning process was presented by them out of its social context, as a purely technical operation designed to secure the best for all interests. Its rationality was stressed and benefits seen, not in terms of who gains but in neutral terms like economy and efficiency. The assumption was that town planning operated not in a class divided society where there were extreme disparities of wealth and power, but in a society whose problems were essentially those of irrationality and dislocation.

The basis for critically examining this standpoint is that it denied the political reality of life in Britain. The social and economic system was founded on deep class divides and the dominant power in economic and political terms was geared to capitalist interests. The growing power of the working class, through its labour and trade union organisations was a feature of British political life but such power was limited to exerting an ameliorating role. Even when, as in 1924 and 1929-1931, the Labour Party formed the Government, the interests of working people were not predominant. "In office but not in power" sums up the position of Labour Governments where the reins of economic and financial influence continued to be held by relatively small but powerful class interests consisting of individuals, corporations and institutions. Attempts to deny these power 'realities' are seen as essentially 'ideological' whose purpose is to secure the passivity of the working class and the co-operation of the more traditionally-minded elements of the capitalist class.

The ideology of consensus and compromise proved to be a surprisingly powerful and long lasting one, gaining dominance in Britain after the Second World War and remaining until the late 1970s. Its roots are

seen to lay in significant part, in the growing power of the working class and the way that power was wielded. On the one hand the traditional forces of capital were forced to concede increasing degrees of power to the forces of labour in both the economic and political fields. On the other hand the forces of labour proved reluctant to secure complete power. In a sense this stalemate is characteristic of late capitalism generally and is the essential underpinning of compromise ideology. In the compromise capitalist interests yielded an increasing proportion of profit to the working class in the form of increased wages, reduced hours and better conditions. On behalf of the working class, labour leaders accepted the existing state apparatus and were thereby relieved of the problems and responsibilities of challenging for outright power and control. Put another way, the historic compromise consists of capitalist interests agreeing to curb the free market economy in favour of greater state intervention and regulation and labour forces agreeing to forego any revolutionary intentions to seek a new social and economic system based on socialism and the common ownership of the economy. It can be critically asserted however, that the compromise was heavily loaded in favour of the capitalist class and that the advantages for the working class were limited and transient. It is not intended to pursue this issue here, but it is a feature that is reflected in the context of town planning in the inter-war years. This study seeks to address the question of conflict and compromise and to investigate through case studies what actually happened in practice.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this study seeks to work within an analysis which asserts that between 1919 and 1933 Britain was a capitalist society in which power was primarily wielded by a class of industrialists and

financiers who owned and controlled the key levers of economic and financial power as well as the main political sources of power. Despite personal predeliction this class were forced to concede a growing role for government in the development process. Town planning can be seen, within this context, as part of that process.

Leading representatives of both the dominant and working classes were concerned in the 1920s and early 1930s to explore the possibilities of convergence and compromise, each in their own interest. From this stemmed the ideology of consensus with its particular view of the state as either an umpire in resolving conflicting social interests or as the arbiter of the national interest. Such a position was in accord with the professional ideology of town planning.

These broad theoretical assumptions underline this study which seeks to examine what is perceived to be the crucial period of institutionalisation of modern British town planning in the 15 years after the First World War. It is against this general, theoretical background that the more specific hypotheses, outlined in the next chapter, should be viewed.

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### Chapter 3 - The Hypotheses

A number of hypotheses are put forward as a means of testing out responses to the aims outlined in the Introduction. There is, naturally, a degree of overlap between the two aims and this is reflected in the hypotheses as well.

1. Despite the language of hope and challenge embodied in the post-war 'Reconstruction Language', perhaps it was never seriously intended by either the Government or 'Whitehall' to use town planning as a radical tool for change. Rather, it may have been seen essentially as a regulatory mechanism, applicable to limited areas of land and a co-ordinating mechanism for certain aspects of development to be introduced piecemeal and slowly in order to gain the acceptance of land owners and developers of various kinds.
2. Town planning can be located within a general movement of increasing state intervention in the period 1919 to 1933. It can be viewed as a prototype of broader economic and financial management advocated by progressive capitalists and reformist labour leaders. Such a view may offer useful insights into the nature of town planning in the study period. As such town planning's key words, 'economy', 'efficiency' and 'non-political' may be seen as the precursor of the technical ideology that was to underpin much of the planning ideology of the period 1940 to 1977.
3. Town planning like other forms of physical and economic intervention may be seen as a compromise between laissez-faire or rampant capitalism on the one hand and total state control (and totalitarianism) of fascism and socialism on the other

hand. Such a view appears to have emerged in the period under study and added a 'middle-road' aspect to the developing ideological package of consensus and compromise.

4.

In practical terms the need for intervention and regulation offered by statutory town planning may be seen as necessary in the field of land-use and communications because the industrial system of capitalism could not adjust to growing urban pressures quickly and efficiently (i.e. profitably) through market mechanisms. It is feasible that sections of landowners and industrialists were, therefore, prepared to sacrifice long cherished ownership rights for the sake of more orderly development.

From the standpoint of the working class, town planning could be viewed as an extension of better housing. However some of the more far sighted working class representatives recognised the wider reform benefits that town planning could offer and perhaps for this reason the garden city idea gained a place on the agenda of the labour and trade union movement after the First World War. But the lack of practical achievement and a concentration upon council housing and later slum clearance may have diverted attention away from the radical potential of town planning.

5.

Central and local state bureaucracies can be seen to have strengthened the role of town planning as a regulatory mechanism rather than a radical reforming tool. The view is put forward that this may have been due to several possible reinforcing factors. At both central and local level state officials may have seen their role as 'neutral' and 'non-political' in so far

as implementing technical services was concerned. Town planning may have been viewed in Whitehall and the Town Hall as an activity rather similar to aspects of engineering and as such perhaps they sought to achieve a uniformity of practice and procedure, thereby exercising important controls on planning outcomes.

In the political field both local and central government officials were likely to reflect the predominance of Conservative political values and this may have been reinforced by a professional code which tended to eschew radicalism and embody the status quo.

6. It is possible that the experience of statutory town planning under the second Town Planning Act demonstrated that it could be embraced without threatening the essential basis of capitalist society and that this helped to cement the foundations of a new local government activity that remained largely unchanged in substance thereafter.

These points and hypotheses are studied at both national and local level. But it is local government practice that provides the main linking aspect of this work. The study is concerned to examine local evidence for both the broad issues of purpose and the more precise nature of scope. The questions to be addressed from the local perspective include 'how did local authorities adjust to statutory town planning in the years after the First World War?', 'what were the varying experiences?', and 'how did local interests react?'. Local studies provide the chief test-bed for town planning analysis in this country and by looking at the experience of town planning in the Teesside and Hartlepool areas the study seeks to test the view that the

central ideological thrust of town planning was as a consensus based activity and that town planning became a consolidated and uniform local government activity setting the parameters of style and content for 50 years or more.

The next part of the study seeks to establish the historical context for statutory town planning between the wars, showing how the 1919, Housing, Town Planning Etc., Act, owed much to a long nineteenth century liberal tradition of state intervention in social and development issues and also anticipated growing pressures for more collectivist measures in the twentieth century.



## **PART 2**

### **THE CONTEXT FOR THE FIRST TOWN PLANNING ACTS**

- \* Chapter 4 Pathways to British Statutory Town Planning**
- \* Chapter 5 The First Town Planning Act**
- \* Chapter 6 The Genesis of the 1919 Town Planning Act**
- \* Chapter 7 The 1919 Act. Towns fit for Heroes?**

## Chapter 4 - Pathways to British Statutory Town Planning

The 1919 Housing, Town Planning etc., Act was the second piece of legislation in this country which dealt specifically with town planning. Before considering in detail the significance and operation of that Act it is necessary to look at the various strands which led ten years earlier to the first statutory basis for town planning. For the 1919 Act, while marking important new steps in town planning and taking place in social, economic and political circumstances of a different order to that before the First World War, nevertheless contained many seeds of the past. Moreover, the practitioners of the 1919 Act carried many preconceptions and values in their luggage which owed as much to the nineteenth century as to the twentieth. It will, therefore, be helpful in any evaluation of the scope and purpose of town planning in the 1920s and early 1930s to review the pathways that led to that historic moment in 1909 when town planning received its first modern statutory foundation.

### The 1906 Liberal Government

The context for the 1909 Act can be most immediately located within one of the great reforming governments of the Edwardian era, that of the Liberal Government of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. In broader terms the Act can be seen as part of the longer process whereby a laissez-faire approach to government was replaced by more and more state intervention. This development accelerated throughout the advanced capitalist countries in the two decades prior to the First World War.

In 1914 at the inaugural dinner of the Town Planning Institute, John Burns, President of the Local Government Board and guest of honour, was introduced as 'the father of Town Planning'. He was then, and has

usually been seen since, as the key figure in securing the passage of the 1909 Act. In fact the real hero of statutory town planning is more properly Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. For it was he, and not John Burns, who was most keen on introducing new legislation for town planning purposes. As Henry Aldridge makes clear in his book, 'The Case for Town Planning' published in 1915, the key event in determining that the victorious Liberal Government would place town planning on the statute book occurred shortly after their election in November, 1906. The occasion was a deputation organised by the National Housing Reform Council to the Prime Minister and the President of the Local Government Board. Aldridge, in his report of that meeting, makes it quite clear that Burns was most unenthusiastic about new reforms.

"To sum up, he (Burns) believed that if the deputation did everything in their powers to stimulate Local Authorities to do their duty, nine tenths of that of which they asked a centralised department to undertake would be accomplished." (1)

On the other hand, Campbell-Bannerman was more enthusiastic and saw the need for further action, expressing a view, common then and since, that, "There is no question of politics on this subject." (2)

Whilst the personal pledge of a Prime Minister was crucial in bringing about legislation at that particular juncture it was nevertheless an event within a context and it is that broad background that is important in enabling adequate explanations to be furnished as to why, and generally when, statutory town planning arose in this country.

### The Roots of Reformism

The political context for the reforming role of the 1906 Liberal Government was based upon a complex set of values and concerns

that have a number of links back into the nineteenth century. One clear link was the moral and religious notion that saw a duty in securing better conditions for the mass of the people. Campbell-Bannerman exemplified this approach as witness the following sentiment in a speech he delivered to the leaders of Glasgow in 1907 on the occasion of his receipt of the freedom of the City,

"What is all our wealth and learning and the fine flower of civilisation and our Constitution and our political theories - what are all these but dust and ashes, if the men and women, on whose labour the whole social fabric is maintained, are doomed to live and die in darkness and misery of the recesses of our great cities?" (3)

Another, rather more practical strand of Reformism rested on what was frequently referred to as 'efficiency'. The hidden meaning of this term was the need to ensure a fit and active workforce capable of maintaining production and profits. To some extent the adoption of reforms to promote economic efficiency involved a conflict between short term costs and long term benefits.

A further factor in promulgating reforms was the fear of the masses as a political force. There was a widespread concern as towns and cities grew that the populace, goaded by fearful conditions would revolt. This has to be largely inferred because it tended to be part of a hidden agenda of the ruling class and not spelt out.

All of these considerations, however, presented only one face of 'reformism', that is, the reforms motivated by a powerful class seeking to exercise their power in a judicious and appropriate manner. On the other side of the fence 'reformism' also came to be the dominant tendency of working class political movements. Rather than overturn



society in a revolution the labour movement chose the path of peaceful reform as the means to change conditions and achieve greater political and economic power.

But before either major classes in society came to adopt reformism as the central feature of their outlook, older philosophies held sway and continued to exercise a force in opinions and actions. For the dominant industrial capitalist class the mainspring of their power lay in individualist philosophy. For working people the original reaction to their life in the tumult of the industrial revolution lay primarily in a utopian yearning for an alternative form of society. Both individualism and utopianism acted as strong constraints on the unbridled adoption of reformism for both groups in society. Many of these tensions can be seen in both the adoption of statutory town planning and in the values, attitudes and demands of the town planning movement.

### Individualism & Laissez-Faire

Individualist philosophy translated into political language meant that the individual capitalist or financier had the right to accumulate private wealth without hindrance. The role of the state was fundamentally to ensure that men of property could exercise that right and interference in the liberty of the individual was limited. Such a philosophy is inimical to state planning. Despite the gradual modification of individualism to take account of the practical and moral needs of society, many men of property held onto the idea that they had an inalienable right to act according to their individual interests. This position of individualism and its state manifestation of 'laissez-faire' was yielded only after much opposition and struggle. But social opposition was not the only factor and not necessarily the

decisive one. Of much more relevance were the objective needs of the social and economic system itself.

Laissez-faire was an essential approach in the era of the industrial revolution when there was a need to provide vast incentives to the holders of wealth and capital so that the forces of industrialism could be released. Going back further into history it can be argued that the roots of individualism lay in the needs of merchants and bankers to free themselves from the limitations of the Church and the restrictive laws and attitudes of the medieval powers of King and aristocracy based on landed, feudal relations. In any event, the crucial determining factor in the adoption of an ideology lies in its ability to legitimate the aspirations and interests of the group to which it relates. By this token the gradual ending of laissez-faire and its replacement by a more collectivist and managed position relates to the needs of the system. Once the power of the vast economic forces of the industrial revolution and the accompanying changes in population, settlement and transport had been set in train, it became imperative to exercise control and order. The alternative was already being experienced in the 1820 to 1850 period which was marked by disease, epidemics, housing shortages and transport problems which not only put a strain on social order but economic prosperity. Acceding to demands for social and political reforms enabled two objectives to be met; containing potential revolution and enhancing the economic well-being of the system. To provide an ideological framework for these changes the ideas of John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer replaced those of Jeremy Bentham and John Locke. (4)

The 1906 Liberal Government was both the heir to successive Liberal Governments of the nineteenth century and the carrier of nascent socialist aspirations which eventually came to pass later in the

twentieth century. These aspirations were lodged in the desire of working people for social and economic reforms. The Liberal Party became the main receptacle for such demands until the Labour Party grew in authority. The Party also garnered the support of the rural poor, who, perhaps influenced by the rising power of labour in the towns and cities, deserted their traditional Tory landed leaders.<sup>(5)</sup> In this way the 1906 Liberal Government can be seen as the first popular reformist government.

### Utopianism

Reformism as a popular concept had replaced the more radical, alternative outlooks of utopianism and marginalised the revolutionary ideas of marxism. Utopianism as an outlook was complex and not formulated as a clear strategy. In essence it was the belief that capitalism had to be replaced by a totally different system. Co-operation and collectivism were to replace competition and individualism. In this way the tyranny of capitalism would be replaced by a system which met the needs of the masses. Like many utopias before and since, the vision of the completely new society was given physical presence by conjuring up ideas of new towns or communities in which the horrors of industrialism were banished.<sup>(6)</sup> Indeed many of these utopian visions held either implicitly or explicitly that the new physical arrangements of the settlements would transform the behaviour of man, turning him from a savage to a new civilised, socialist man. Such physical determinism has since played a significant role in the development of ideas in the environmental sciences.

Utopianism, or utopian socialism as it was usually formulated, was an understandable reaction for a mass of people trapped in the horrors of the new urban environment created by the forces of capitalism:



unregulated and governed by a philosophy of laissez-faire. Denied access to any power, ruthlessly oppressed, reformism was hardly an option. Only revolt of the Luddite kind and the vision of a new world were left open. The ideas of revolutionary marxian socialism had not been born. Thus the early working class movements placed their trust on the power of persuasion and the moral righteousness of their plight. Chartism was essentially within this mould.<sup>(7)</sup> The reforms of the Charter would, if granted, have resulted in the overthrow of capitalism, and were rejected by the ruling class. The methods of the Chartists revealed their traditional utopian stance. The defeat of the Chartists led to reappraisal and the long haul to developing defence mechanisms for the working class in trade unions and local community organisations and in religion. Demands became more fragmented and less utopian.

Alongside this development the belief that the worst conditions of society could be remedied or alleviated by the intervention of national and local government took root in many layers of the upper and middle classes. The middle years of the nineteenth century saw a burgeoning of reform movements, many concerned with the conditions of life in towns and cities.

### The Town Planning Movement

It is against this broad canvass of change from the poles of unrestricted capitalism and utopian socialism to increasing state intervention and control and management of social and economic life that we can chart the emergence and development of a town planning movement. Such a movement owed a great deal to all the trends discerned above. It too had utopian origins, derived much from the moralistic and paternalistic drives of 'good' capitalists, and



eventually lodged in the tide of social and economic reform movements of the latter half of the nineteenth century. The details of this movement have been well researched.<sup>(8)</sup> Its influence on bringing about statutory town planning was clearly significant.

The many strands of the town planning movement each played their part in moulding opinion. Robert Owen in his various activities influenced both capitalists and working people. New Lanark showed that an enlightened, welfare approach to working people could pay handsome dividends. His communitarian experiments and utopian writings held up alternative ways of social living.<sup>(9)</sup> From New Lanark successive model towns charted a progressive improvement in the arrangement of industrial towns, from Saltaire to Bournville and Port Sunlight. From the vision of completely new settlements one can trace an influence to Ebenezer Howard and the notion of the Garden City.<sup>(10)</sup>

If Owen and other enlightened capitalists showed how practically towns and cities could be arranged to give decent environments then the movements for improved sanitation, water supply, better streets and lighting and above all new housing standards showed how legislation might enable such experiments to gain wider application. Chadwick and Simon beat a main path to the 1909 act by bringing local and national state resources to bear on city problems.<sup>(11)</sup> They were followed by Lord Shaftesbury, Octavia Hill and others who pressed for more and more state intervention on housing.<sup>(12)</sup> It is no accident that town planning was seen by many to be closely involved in housing and thereby<sup>came</sup> to be linked to statutory housing provisions in the first two acts. The important delegation that went to see Campbell-Bannerman and John Burns in November, 1906, was organised by the National Housing Reform Council who recognised that the key to making better housing provision lay in the proper planning of towns and cities.<sup>(13)</sup>

The Town Planning movement then can be most fruitfully located within the broad trends of reformism as can the actual passing of town planning legislation. But the reason why the powerful interests that controlled Britain in 1906 should accede to the demands of the town planning lobby and at that particular time rest on two factors. The first is the economic needs of late Victorian and Edwardian capitalism and the second is the accumulated power of local government.

### The Need for State Intervention in Urban Development

It is not possible to separate out the perception of economic needs from the social and cultural influences that frame that perception. So all the various comments on the development of reformism are significant in leading the rulers of Britain in the period after 1875 to different conclusions to those before this approximate date. But problems were multiplying and accumulating. The legacy of unplanned and rapid industrialisation and urbanisation was increasingly apparent after the mid-nineteenth century. Hence the growth of state intervention and a mounting array of social legislation. Added to the legacy was a continued growth in population and, more importantly, a spread of cities occasioned by new transport methods. Nor was this unique to Britain. All the advanced capitalist countries, particularly Britain, the U.S.A., Germany and France experienced acute developmental problems in the 30 or 40 years before the First World War. Each of them responded by increasing the system of controls and sought to avoid further chaos that continued laissez-faire policies might have brought. (14)

### Local Government

The progress of other countries in adopting measures to control and direct developments in towns and cities did not go unnoticed in

Britain. In particular the local authorities, and active individuals within them, highlighted the way other countries managed their settlement growth or the redevelopment processes in a more efficient and enlightened way.<sup>(15)</sup> Decades of intervention in the urban governance of Britain had built up, slowly but steadily, a system of local government that administered the towns and countryside of Britain. As the local state accumulated more power and resources so it became a force for change.

The delegation that sought to persuade Campbell-Bannerman and John Burns to place town planning on the statute book was originated, as already mentioned, by the National Housing Reform Council which orientated a lot of its work towards the local authorities. Among those on the delegation were Alderman Thompson, a prominent local authority figure based in Richmond, Surrey and several other local authority figures.

#### International Example

The delegation also included the figures of T.C. Horsfall who had brought to the attention of the British public the example of town planning in Germany.<sup>(16)</sup> Significantly the main achievement of German town planning was in the regulation of town extensions or suburban growth. As new methods of public transport advanced, using trams, buses and underground railways so the prospect of more and more suburban sprawl opened up.<sup>(17)</sup> The need to ensure that this new development did not repeat the mistakes of the earlier Victorian town growth became apparent to both local authorities and leading opinion makers.

S.D. Adshead, the first Lever Professor of Civic Design at the University of Liverpool wrote in 1910, shortly after the passing of the first Town Planning Act:



"Many influences have operated in bringing about the introduction and ultimate passing of the Town Planning Act, amongst which I would mention the forward example of Liverpool; German legislation, and the broad-minded attitude of the German municipalities towards town extension; the awakening of the public in the United States to the urgent need for central control in city development in so far as it affects not only the private owner but the citizen at large; and last but not least, the enterprise of private individuals, societies, and associations in this country, such as the Garden City Association, the Co-partnership Tenants, and the Housing Reform Council."(18)

Leaving aside the obeisance to the home town of Liverpool, the interesting feature of this quote is the prominence it gives to the international example in securing statutory town planning in Britain. It is a theme which was not really recognised by historiographers of British Town Planning until recently, although mention should be made of Reynolds, 1952.(19) In taking up the internationalist theme modern commentators have sought to derive new explanations for the development of urban planning. Sutcliffe, in particular, in 'Towards the Planned City', 1981, begins to search for the common threads in four advanced urban and capitalist countries, Britain, Germany, France and the U.S.A., and notes the way the social and economic systems required greater state intervention to control the urban process.(20) Certainly one can see how the emergence of statutory town planning in Britain was part of a long term trend towards state intervention in various aspects of economic and social life. A trend which accelerated towards the end of the nineteenth century, hastened by a growing awareness of the significance of urban problems to many economic and social issues and



the increasing popularity of a reformist programme for improved welfare and better environmental conditions. The next chapter considers the very first Town Planning Act of 1909, pointing to its main provisions and assesses its impact.

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## Chapter 5 - The First Town Planning Act

The 1909 Housing, Town Planning etc., Act was more concerned with housing than town planning. In its housing provisions, as in its town planning aspects it was not a particularly bold measure. In housing terms it extended the powers of local authorities in rural housing and in clearing unfit dwellings but it did not mark a great new phase of public activity.

The town planning provisions are significant in that they marked the start of the statutory process in this country. But in themselves they offered very little compared to the scale of the urban problem and more progress had to await the 1919 Act..

The town planning provisions of the 1909 Act did not glide through Parliament unopposed, despite Campbell-Bannerman's assertion that it was a non-political matter.<sup>(1)</sup> Whilst receiving a wide measure of support there was a significant opposition from certain traditional vested interests, notably from the landed classes. Thus the original Bill of 1908 passed relatively easily through its main readings but was held up in Committee stage. There it fell through lack of time and had to be reintroduced in 1909. At its second attempt it attracted even more attention from the opposition. Dozens of amendments were put at Committee stage. Although these were guillotined, the Government was forced to pay a price when the House of Lords pressed for key changes.

### The Town Planning Provisions

Even before the House of Lords had successfully de-gutted the Bill of some of its more positive town planning features the scope of the measure was narrow and its detailed application not thoroughly thought through. Town planning was only to apply to new development, following

the example of town extension planning in Germany. The measure was only permissive, enabling the progressive authorities to proceed but doing nothing to bring those uninclined to act to deal with their real urban problems. Although the provisions of 1909 were weak and only applied to part of town development they nevertheless established three important principles of planning law that have remained since. These were:

- (i) future developments must accord with an approved town planning scheme which sets out 'proper sanitary conditions, amenity and convenience';
- (ii) compensation is payable to the owners of land who are injuriously affected by town planning proposals, and
- (iii) betterment is payable to the local community (authority) when an increase in land values accrues to an owner as the result of planning proposals.

In the end the House of Lords succeeded in placing restrictions on all three of these key elements of town planning. On the first they insisted that power be taken out of the hands of the Local Government Board in determining planning schemes. All submitted Schemes had to be sent to both Houses of Parliament where they had to 'lay' for 30 days. If either House objected to the Scheme then the Scheme became null and void. On the second issue of compensation the landowners' position was strengthened by providing for reference to an arbitrator and for the inclusion of claims on the basis of the 'excessive' restrictions of any town planning scheme. Finally on the vexed question of betterment, the Lords reduced the scale of betterment from the initially proposed 100% to 50%.



## Implementing the Act

In seeking to implement the new powers local authorities found the Act to be excessively cumbersome and time consuming as well as restrictive in its scope. The financial aspects of compensation and betterment, always to be the 'Achilles Heel' of British town planning, were bound to put off the timorous. In fact very few local authorities did take advantage of the new Town Planning Act. Only just over 100 local authorities engaged in any aspect of statutory town planning in the period 1909 to 1919 and of these only 9 secured the full validation and approval of their Schemes.<sup>(2)</sup> The rest generally only got as far as securing the approval of the Local Government Board to prepare or adopt Schemes. Of the 9 authorities who completed their Schemes Birmingham was the most active, preparing 5 Schemes and securing statutory backing for 3 others by 1913. The other 8 authorities were scattered throughout the country. They were: Leeds, Hunslet, Otley, Margam, Rochdale, Chesterfield, Ruislip-Northwood and North Bromsgrove. Their success may well be due to the presence of Borough Engineers and other officers who had taken a keen interest in town planning matters and were prepared to see through the various stages of procedure which included numerous notifications to land and property owners, the necessity to try and resolve objections, and to cope with claims for compensation and betterment. It is of little surprise to see that Birmingham was at the forefront of local town planning. Their involvement in civic improvement and municipal housing under such powerful figures as J.S. Nettlefold and the Chamberlain family had been a feature of English Local Government for many years.<sup>(3)</sup> What is surprising is that other authorities who had also been pressing for legislation in this field should not make a similar impact. Both Liverpool and Manchester did begin schemes but never completed the full process. Manchester, in fact, made no moves at all until 1916.

## Experience in Teesside & Hartlepool

Within the Teesside and Hartlepool area only West Hartlepool used the 1909 Act for town planning purposes. An examination of the details of the way in which the West Hartlepool Town Planning Scheme proceeded between 1913 when it was first raised in the Borough Council and 1917 when the Local Government Board gave them permission to proceed reveals both the cumbersome machinery of planning procedure under this Act and the motives and reactions of the local authorities and local landowners concerned. (4)

The County Borough of West Hartlepool decided in December, 1913 to prepare a Town Planning Scheme for an area which embraced not only part of their own Borough but substantial parts of the neighbouring authorities of Hartlepool Town Council and Hartlepool Rural District Council. The stated reason for embarking upon such a course was that the past ten years of industrial growth in the area pointed to a need to plan for further developments, much of which would need to take place in areas adjacent to, but outside the existing boundaries of the County Borough. (5) The neighbouring authorities, not unnaturally suspected the County Borough of laying the basis for its own future expansion - at their expense. In their defence they were able to marshall the power of the Durham County Council. (6)

But even before mounting the first rung of the set of town planning procedures the County Borough had to assemble an up-to-date list of all the landowners in the area of the proposed scheme. This took several months and was necessary because Town Planning Regulations laid down that all landowners had to receive individual notification of the intention of a local authority to apply to the Local Government Board for permission to proceed with a Town Planning Scheme.

The Council was in a position to formally pass a resolution to proceed with an application to the Local Government Board in April, 1914 and letters of notification to all landowners were sent out in May, as was the application to John Burns at the Local Government Board. A year followed in which all the parties involved were able to voice any objections to the County Borough about their proposal. Reaction was generally hostile and no progress was made in heading off any of the objections. In particular, the adjacent authorities tried various tactics to thwart West Hartlepool. They both suddenly discovered the virtues of town planning and announced that they had been considering pursuing their own schemes. (7)

In May, 1915, the County Borough, having followed the procedure by giving proper time to allow comments and representations and attempting to obtain the agreement of the several parties, moved on to the next stage - formal application to the Local Government Board. Notices to this effect were again required and duly sent out and put into the local press. The Local Government Board were obliged, due to the various objections, to hold a Public Inquiry. The Inquiry was held in July, 1915, under the direction of one of the country's most eminent town planners, Raymond Unwin. It took the Local Government Board 18 months to decide the outcome of the Inquiry which, in short, gave West Hartlepool permission to proceed with a reduced Scheme area. All owners were notified by the Borough in February, 1917 and notices placed in the local papers. The Borough Engineer then proceeded to prepare a number of detailed reports. Between 1917 and 1919 four such reports were produced but there was no clear progress on preparing the Preliminary Statement and Map of proposals. By this time the 1909 Act had been overtaken by the 1919 Act.



## Assessing the 1909 Act

The experience of West Hartlepool illustrates several problems that local authorities faced in seeking to undertake statutory town planning under the 1909 Act. The hostility of many local landowners, the suspicions of adjoining local authorities, and the sheer time it took to climb over each hurdle of the procedure, was a common experience. In fact one suspects that many authorities who embarked upon town planning under the 1909 Act gave in through exhaustion and exasperation. Professional officers, however keen, faced a point when they could no longer afford the time to devote continuing resources to a matter which often only received lukewarm support from local councillors. In the case of Hartlepool it was apparent that momentum for town planning ran out in 1919. The Borough Engineer, in the wake of the Local Government Board approval to proceed, prepared reports of a technical nature but none of these were related to the procedural needs of a Town Planning Scheme. It was quite possible that the expertise in statutory town planning was not available in Hartlepool. Certainly there appears to have been very little national consideration given to the professional and technical requirements of launching a new area of legislation. Lack of professional town planning expertise within the local authorities was undoubtedly a problem in gaining further progress under the 1909 Act, just as it was for subsequent Town Planning Acts. The disappointing take-up of the 1909 Act was only partly due to the inherent problems of implementing the Act. Despite widespread propaganda on behalf of town planning by a variety of organisations such as the National Housing Reform Council (later the National Housing and Town Planning Council), the Garden Cities Association and the Co-partnership Tenants' Association and, from 1914, the professional input of the Town Planning Institute, too few local



authorities were convinced of the need or value of town planning. In addition, Central Government also appeared to lack conviction in the appropriateness of the new legislation and made little effort to spread the policy of town planning.(8)

Perhaps, because town planning was seen as 'non political' it was treated as such and never became a live political topic in the way, say, housing became. The fact that town planning legislation was added on to a Housing Act indicates the rating it made in political consciousness. So although the objective conditions for an extension of urban policy into town planning existed due to the rising tide of reformism and the need for new frameworks to deal with such matters as, the problems of new housing in suburbs, development issues in the inner city areas, and the emergence of major traffic congestion in the larger towns, the subjective conditions in terms of a heightened political awareness did not. Important steps on that road were to be taken during the end of the war years when attitudes to the reconstruction of society in the aftermath of a major war produced a new approach to planning in Whitehall and a deeper breadth of political acceptance of town planning in the localities. These processes are considered in the next chapter.

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## Chapter 6 – The Genesis of the 1919 Town Planning Act

There was an ambiguity about the second Town Planning Act of 1919. It was born in a period of post-war hope for a new reconstructed society and as such had some significant new features when compared to the 1909 Act. But the provisions of the Act also illustrated that, despite the gloss of radicalism that was abroad in 1919 the substance of political power was still deeply conservative. The scope of town planning, its method and style, were to remain largely unchanged. These twin themes of change and continuity characterise much of town planning history and their relative strengths reflect the momentum of change that exists at any one time.

### The Impact of the First World War

The experience of war carried the shock waves of change into many aspects of British life and this was reflected in important pieces of legislation. But the residual power of those who effectively ran the country basing themselves on the strength of capital and finance and less and less on land, was still enormous. Once the rumbling of the First World War ceased their power reasserted itself and the elements of radicalism that had been taken on board in terms of state policy were generally jettisoned or subsumed by traditional practices. But, the political forces within British society which challenged the status quo during and just after the 'Great War' continued to exert a pressure. These forces essentially based themselves on the working class and sought greater collectivism and social welfare for the masses. Their case for change was made sharper by the growing contradictions in social and economic life. For the proponents of town planning these tensions were clear to see in the problems associated with sprawling suburbs, a declining rural scene and everywhere the impact of the motor vehicle.



The First World War was such a cataclysmic event that it can be seen as one of those great junctures or discontinuities in world history. It was one of those relatively rare periods in history when change and turmoil dominate over continuity and stability. But, once the war was over, the knots of history were re-tied and links back to pre-war society were re-established, albeit in different ways and proportions. It is important in seeking to assess the effect of the war to disentangle those knots and to try to see just how much change had been effected.

For the mass of people at home in Britain during the war, social and economic life probably improved. There were, of course, exceptions, notably in acute housing shortages, but by and large the war acted as a catalyst for change in favour of working people, both salaried and wage earners - a process that had been going on slowly since the 1880s.

Stevenson, 1984, identifies four main social effects of the war: the impact on living standards, including poverty and health; the increased emancipation of women; the strengthening of organised labour; and the collectivist and democratising role of the war including the stimulus to wider social reform. (1)

However, if one views these effects as positive (and this is by no means clear in all the cases) there were a number of negative sides to the war. In the first place the war was a horrendous experience of human carnage on a scale hitherto unknown. In Britain the stock of young men was sadly depleted. In all 800,000 people were killed and 2 million wounded. This legacy was felt throughout the 1920s and 1930s. According to figures quoted by Stevenson 31% of all men aged 20-24 in 1914 were killed and 28% of those aged 13-19. (2)

There was also a more difficult, hidden negative effect. The decline of Britain in terms of its relative position in world trade and production, although not an even process can be discerned from the 1870s onwards.<sup>(3)</sup> The power of the British Empire and the enormous wealth accumulated over a century of massive industrial growth helped to mask this relative decline. Such a decline was due in part to the growth of new industrial giants, particularly the U.S.A. But, it was also due to the fact that British capitalism had lost its vital innovative, competitive thrust. This may be seen as a legacy of being the first industrial nation and the dominant power in the world. Enjoying monopolistic power does not lend itself to innovative and forceful economic activity; rather there is a tendency to conservatism. This underlying weakness in the motor of the British economy became apparent during the Edwardian period. The First World War provided a breathing space from these problems but it also deepened the crisis.<sup>(4)</sup> Widespread dislocation of industry occurred as efforts were made to create a war economy. The real need for major investment in basic industry and in new industries was largely put off. When this is allied to the improvements made to wages and conditions of the workforce due to the increased power of organised labour, one can see that the weak position of British industry was compounded. Labour was able to exact improvements because the war economy led a high demand for labour which was already heavily depleted by the expansion of the armed forces.

The socially progressive features of the war laid the basis for considerable confrontation between class interests in the post-war era. It is possible to over-emphasise the significance of the war in this respect. Social conflict had been a growing aspect of pre-war life. The years 1910-1914 were unprecedented so far as strikes and civil

unrest were concerned. But in this period working class revolt was essentially politically unorganised and often spontaneous.<sup>(5)</sup> During the war the organisation of labour increased and the growing power of working people internationally raised expectations and confidence. Tensions in certain areas of Britain, both during the war and in its aftermath, were on a scale not seen before. Clydeside in particular became a focal point of working class agitation and a potential source of revolutionary change. During the war Lloyd George was forced to compromise with the Scottish workers' demands. In 1919 however, he used tanks and gun boats to confront striking engineers in Glasgow.<sup>(6)</sup>

The post-war period, like all such periods, was one of much popular rhetoric. After great social sacrifice and collective effort even the most individualist politician or industrialist was forced to bend his normal language to take account of the yearning for peace and a better life. The collective democratic advance of the war could not be immediately dismantled. The international wave of progress hastened by the war had not yet broken. The Russian Revolution in 1917 and the German Revolt of 1918 heightened hopes of a major social revolution throughout Europe.<sup>(7)</sup> The conservative forces had to try and ride the tiger if they were to remain in control. It was during this period of post-war euphoria and promises of homes fit for heroes that major new advances in social legislation, among them town planning, was achieved.

### The Influence of Professionals & Administrators

Within this broad canvass of change one can also identify important events which came to influence the outlook of those who held the reins of power. The town planning movement had always been largely outside power, seeking to influence the politicians and those in key state



positions in central and local government. The 1909 Act partly redressed that problem. The Local Government Board established a Town Planning Division and placed professional staff within it. Thomas Adams, a surveyor, and a key figure in establishing the Town Planning Institute in 1914, was appointed to the Local Government Board as its Town Planning Inspector. There was, therefore, for the first time, a professional town planning presence within Whitehall. Similarly the introduction of town planning powers to local authorities gave an enhanced role to those engineers and surveyors and other professional and technical staff who operated the Act at local level. All of this helped to provide a layer of influence on planning matters that had been absent before.

There had also been a developing awareness of the necessity to provide improved roads and traffic control. A London Traffic Branch was formed within the Board of Trade in 1907 following the Royal Commission Report on London Traffic two years earlier.<sup>(8)</sup> In 1909 a Road Board was established including, among others, Rees Jeffreys, who had a close tie with the town planning world, later becoming a founder member of the Town Planning Institute. In 1913 the President of the Local Government Board, John Burns, presided over a conference of 115 local authorities, 12 societies and associations, the Board of Trade and the Road Board to discuss the need for arterial roads around London. Although subsequent progress in linking town planning and traffic matters was to be less than satisfactory, the events in the decade prior to the First World War show how issues of vital concern to planning were being placed upon the agenda of the Government and Local Authorities. The war saw further examples of this growing influence.

Arguably if town planning was to become much more successful in Britain it required a much more sympathetic climate within which to operate.

In other words the implications of a planned approach to urban governance were that other aspects of social and economic life also required a planned approach. In fact this 'planning idea' as it came to be called, did not arrive in any thorough manner until after the Second World War. But it did make progress and increase its influence, most noticeable during the First World War and in the later 1920s and 1930s. This phenomenon is discussed in detail in Chapter 12.

During the First World War central government became much less hidebound in both its recruitment and in its outlook. This did not occur at once, although there were some new developments early in the war which gave increased influence to town planners. In 1914 Thomas Adams resigned and was replaced by Raymond Unwin as Chief Town Planning Inspector. At the same time George Pepler was appointed to the Local Government Board with special responsibility for arterial roads and town planning conferences. Thus began the Government careers of two men whose influence in spreading the idea of town planning from within Government were to span the next twenty to thirty years. Unwin's activities, in fact, took him out of the Local Government Board for much of the war. In 1915 he was seconded to the Explosives Division of the Ministry of Munitions to take charge of an ambitious programme of factory and house building. Under the exigencies of war the role of the state grew enormously and Unwin moved from the largely exhortatory role as Chief Town Planning Inspector to implementing town planning ideas in state housing and state run industry projects.(9)

### Reconstruction

The most significant war-time advance for the extension of ideas of state intervention occurred in 1916 when the Prime Minister, Asquith, established an informal Reconstruction Group and later a Reconstruction

Committee. When Asquith was replaced by Lloyd George the latter set up a new Reconstruction Committee in 1917 and eventually a Ministry of Reconstruction under Addison. The work of the Reconstruction Committees and Ministry has been analysed by Paul Barton Johnston, 1968.<sup>(10)</sup> In his book he shows how the scope and work of the various Reconstruction Committees and sub-committees developed. Whilst housing issues were of central concern the activities of research and policy formulation reached into areas of Government administration, agriculture, land, education, forestry and health. Many of those who were recruited to work on these several themes were radical thinkers and Fabians from academic backgrounds. They brought with them an approach which was concerned with rationality and efficiency as well as a commitment to extend the role of the state on behalf of the population as a whole. A variety of town planning and housing activists became involved in some aspect of 'Reconstruction' work. Raymond Unwin was drafted into an early sub-committee on housing and in 1917 became the prime thinker in the committee of inquiry set up by the President of the Local Government Board to examine the question of the provision of housing for the working class. The Chairman of this Committee was Sir John Tudor Walters.<sup>(11)</sup>

The work of the Reconstruction Ministry between 1917 and 1918 provided the basis for Lloyd George's election programme in 1918 and the subsequent reform package put into effect between 1918 and 1920. This package of reforms constituted the promise of "a land fit for heroes" that had been given by Lloyd George in the course of the 1918 election campaign. Given the national mood in 1918, the rising power of Labour, and the need to redeem pledges made in the war, the Coalition Government needed a strong set of reforms to head off any potential revolt or revolution. In any event, the liberal and socialist



sentiment behind much of the reforms was a continuation of pre-war trends, even if in a stronger and more concentrated form.

Five main measures can be cited as the immediate outcome of the Reconstruction Ministry's work. These were the Ministry of Health Act, the Ministry of Transport Act, the Housing, Town Planning etc. Act, the Land Settlement (Facilities) Act, and the Acquisition of Land (Assessment of Compensation) Act. Other statutes of significance included the Forestry Act, the Electricity (Supply) Act, and the Industrial Courts Act. On the face of it this body of legislation, all passed in 1919, represented a major advance of Reformism, but it could hardly be said to constitute a reconstructed society. In many respects other acts passed prior to the new 1918 Government were more far reaching.

The Representation of the People Act, 1918, provided a significant extension of the franchise. Manhood suffrage was at last conceded: all men except peers, lunatics and felons under imprisonment, received the right to vote after six months residency in a constituency. Women, as usual, were less well treated. They received the vote only if over 30, and then only if she or her husband were qualified on the local government franchise by owning or occupying land or premises of an annual value of £5. These reforms added 2 million men and 6 million women to the potential register. At the same time the constituency boundaries were revised in an attempt to divide the country into uniform single-member constituencies representing 70,000 people each. (12)

The strengthening of the democratic basis of government gave an added pressure to introduce more reforms in the post-war era. To balance this factor Lloyd George and his Liberals together with Bonar Law and

the Conservatives decided to contest the new election as a Coalition. The Labour Party decided to withdraw from the war-time Coalition Government and contest the election on its own. The official Liberal Party under Asquith had already broken with Lloyd George. Candidates endorsed by Lloyd George and Bonar Law, or 'Coupon' candidates as they were dubbed by Asquith, held a clear advantage. To strengthen their chances further the election was called while most soldiers were still mobilised and abroad. In the event only 1 in 4 men in the forces voted. Overall the turnout was only 57.6%.<sup>(13)</sup> These events make it clear that the rhetoric of Lloyd George and the government about creating a new society stemmed more from a desire to keep themselves in power than from a genuine desire to meet the wishes of the people.

The centrepiece of post-war 'Reconstruction' was to be a new deal on housing. The detail of the gestation of new housing measures in 1919 has been described by Swenarton, 1981.<sup>(14)</sup> The housing problem was acute. The legacy of a century of poor standards had been compounded by a lack of building during the war that added considerable shortage of housing. This in turn had led to attempts by landlords to raise rents. The fight in Scotland in 1915 to resist rent increases reached epic proportions and involved serious civil disorders. The government was forced to intervene and restrict the rights of landlords.<sup>(15)</sup> In its housing provisions the 1919 Housing, Town Planning Etc., Act marked a break with the past by introducing subsidised local authority building using central government finance. The Act also made it mandatory for local authorities to survey their housing needs and then put into effect the necessary plans. Another Housing Act in 1919 introduced subsidies for private buildings to encourage them to build smaller houses for sale or rent.

Town Planning differed from housing in that it was not a popular issue. On the whole political parties did not take up town planning and adopt policies that could have developed interest. The pressure for town planning came principally from the various interest groups that constituted the town planning movement and from those among the middle and upper class who wished to see a rational, conserving approach to land development and city growth. Their success through new town planning legislation in 1919 is examined in the following chapter which examines the passing of the Act and its main features.

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## Chapter 7 - The 1919 Act: Towns Fit for Heroes?

The town planning provisions of the 1919 Act were of little public concern. This is reflected in the debates in the House of Commons during the passage of the Bill. In the all-important second reading of the Bill only two speakers out of 16 made reference to the town planning aspects of the proposed legislation, apart that is from Dr. Addison, the President of the Local Government Board who opened the debate.<sup>(1)</sup> This was probably a fair reflection of social priorities. Housing was the most pressing social issue of the day. Town Planning, if it was considered at all, was seen as an adjunct to housing; as a means to set the proper framework for decent homes. To this end, statutory town planning had been attached to housing legislation in 1909 and was to be again in 1919.

### The Housing Imperative

The need to build large numbers of houses after the war was paramount. Marion Bowley has estimated that there was a shortage of over 600,000 houses by 1918 which rose to over 800,000 by 1921 as the troops returned.<sup>(2)</sup> The well organised rent strikes of 1915 in Clydeside, already referred to, had alerted the politicians to the potentially explosive issue of housing shortages leading to increased rents as well as ever more cramped conditions. Housing policy, therefore, became the centrepiece of the post-war social programme. Because town planning was linked to housing reform in 1919 it is important to understand the political framework of housing in comprehending the context for town planning. It is also necessary to understand that the arguments for extending and improving the statutory provisions for town planning came from different sources than those for housing. The case for town planning was altogether more esoteric than that for more and better

houses and tended to be confined to middle class and intellectual circles. Tony Sutcliffe makes this point in his book, 'Towards the Planned City', 1981,<sup>(3)</sup> The political and economic case for town planning was, in many ways, more subtle than the housing arguments. Reduced to its lowest level the political need to increase the stock of housing was seen as related to the stability of the social system itself. Dr. Addison in introducing the Housing, Town Planning Etc. Bill to the House of Commons in April, 1919, put the political imperative thus:

"I think there is no dispute in any quarter that this matter is of the utmost importance, from the point of view not only of the physical well being of our people, but of our social stability and industrial content." <sup>(4)</sup>

Several speakers in the debate made direct reference to the threat of Bolshevism and how decent housing could help avert such an occurrence in Britain.<sup>(5)</sup> Mark Swenarton in his book, 'Homes Fit for Heroes', 1981, also notes how, 'the spectre of revolution haunted the war cabinet'.<sup>(6)</sup> Social unrest had been endemic in British society for well over a decade by 1919. It is dubious that a revolutionary situation ever really existed, certainly not in a generalised sense. But the growing militancy of workers, which had been a marked feature of pre-war years, escalated in the period that followed the war.<sup>(7)</sup> As a corollary of this the organisations of the working class also developed.

### The Growth of Working-class Organisation

The Labour Party, founded by the T.U.C. in 1900, gradually assumed from the Liberals the mantle of the party of working people. In 1919 it adopted a far more rigorous approach to organisation and embraced



socialism in a radical new constitution drawn up by Sidney Webb.<sup>(8)</sup> At local level the shop steward movement had been one of the more far reaching social developments of the First World War.<sup>(9)</sup> Even if all this did not add up to the prospect of a British Bolshevik-type revolution it clearly represented a current which challenged the existing status quo. It was a challenge that the dominant political forces in society could only ignore at their peril. The response of the wartime governments was to promote far reaching reforms once the war was over. To this end the Reconstruction Committees referred to in the last chapter were established by Asquith (1916) and Lloyd George (1918) and finally a Ministry of Reconstruction (1917-1919) was set up by Lloyd George under Dr. Addison. As we have seen, this work drew in a wide range of radical Liberals, many of whom subsequently joined the Labour Party, e.g. Addison, Haldane, Greenwood and Reiss. Although town planning was not taken up by the growing labour movement as a major demand like housing it was guaranteed to find support, influenced partly by the recruitment of these rational reformers.

#### Pressure for new Town Planning Legislation

The arguments for changing the statutory provisions of town planning after the initial Act of 1909 came principally from those active in the town planning movement whose central ideas had been adopted nationally by passing the 1909 Act. But the operation of the Act proved both cumbersome and difficult. The criticisms levelled at the 1909 Act by the town planning movement in the years that followed the passing of the Act related to the scope of the Act and its practical operation.<sup>(10)</sup> As noted in an earlier chapter, the scope was restricted to the developing fringe of towns and cities, whilst the operation of the Act was both permissive and lengthy.

The response of the town planning movement to these perceived shortcomings was to formulate a number of demands:

- (i) extend the application of town planning to built-up areas of towns to control redevelopment;
- (ii) make town planning obligatory on local authorities, and
- (iii) simplify the procedure of preparing town planning schemes.

These did not represent a unified set of demands of the town planning movement. The Town Planning Institute,<sup>(11)</sup> for instance, were not in favour of obligatory town planning but the National Housing and Town Planning Council<sup>(12)</sup> were. A further dimension was added by the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association<sup>(13)</sup> who continued to press for the application of garden city principles to planning proposals. Opinion within the town planning movement was divided essentially between those who looked to the post-war legislation as a means of creating a radically 'New Britain' and those who saw things more in terms of general improvement and fine tuning.

The desire for a 'New Britain' may be said to characterise the radical wing of the town planning movement and was most firmly lodged in the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association. The term is vague but reflects a desire for fundamental change rather than just tinkering.<sup>(14)</sup> In 1919 in the aftermath of the war it was this mood which seems to have dominated the country and to have influenced even the most conservative of politicians. It pushed Parliament into passing legislation which could have enabled more far reaching social change than in fact it did. Why it failed to follow the course laid down in the summer and autumn of 1919 will be discussed later. Suffice

it to say that the 1919 Housing, Town Planning Etc., Act went further than the Town Planning Institute had desired and matched the aspirations of the National Housing and Town Planning Council and the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association. In practice however, 1919 did not operate as a sharp break with previous experience nor did the compulsory element of the Act galvanise all of the recalcitrant authorities to undertake statutory town planning. Yet there were gains to town planning in the 1920s, which probably owe their existence to the impetus of the 'New Britain' mood.

### The 1919 Act

The final version of the 1919 Act represented a partial success for the town planning lobby. Much was made of the supposed victory on compulsion when at the eleventh hour provision was made to compel all larger authorities - defined as those with populations in excess of 20,000 as at the time of the 1921 Census - to prepare Town Planning Schemes for the relevant areas within their jurisdiction. Such compulsion, however, was not to be enforced until 1923 and authorities were given until 1926 to submit schemes. This deadline was extended several times before it was abandoned in the 1930s.<sup>(15)</sup> Another major demand of the town planning movement, to extend statutory planning to all built-up areas, was not conceded. Schemes still had to relate to the peripheral areas of towns where development was in progress or could be anticipated. This major weakness was circumvented by some authorities who promoted their own local acts, e.g. the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Act, 1926.

Important advances were made in town planning procedures. Local authorities were generally able to embark upon Town Planning Schemes simply by passing a resolution in their councils. The old rule of



having to gain prior permission of the Minister (a new Ministry of Health replaced the old Local Government Board) was abandoned. Neither was it necessary to gain the consent of the Houses of Parliament to validate the final scheme, although Ministerial approval was still required. These innovations were good news for local authorities keen to progress town planning. The scheme procedure, however, as finally set out in the new Regulations issued in March, 1921, along with Circular 145, still proved to be lengthy and tortuous.<sup>(16)</sup> Professor Abercrombie calculated that if everything went like clockwork the minimum time to complete the process would be two and a half years.<sup>(17)</sup> The Ministry had allowed three years for the larger authorities to submit schemes. In practice the time taken was inordinately longer than this. As can be seen in Appendix 1 the scheme procedure was complicated and potentially fraught with delays.

### Development Control

Two important innovations were introduced by the 1919 Act which deserve special mention, Interim Development Control and so-called Regional Planning. Experience of the 1909 Act had shown that because schemes took so long to prepare, development often proceeded before the scheme was finalised, thus prejudicing the proposals. Alternatively developers would refrain from development until it became clear what the scheme would lay down, thus sterilising land for many years. To cover these eventualities the 1919 Act enabled authorities to give consent to development in anticipation of a scheme. Such consent placed the developer in exactly the same position, as regards compensation, as if the development had been undertaken before the resolution to prepare a town planning scheme was passed. The Statutory Order governing this new procedure was laid down in the Town Planning (General Interim

Development) Order, 1922, and is reproduced in Appendix 1. Among other things this Order set out four basic points which have come to characterise all subsequent development control procedure:

1. The local authority may permit the development of estates and building operations to proceed pending the preparation and approval of a town planning scheme.
2. A person who desires to apply for permission shall apply to the local authority for permission in writing and shall furnish the local authority, together with this application, and in the form required by them, a plan in duplicate showing the proposed method of development and proposed buildings and such further particulars as the local authority may require.
3. The local authority shall, as soon as may be, inform the applicant in writing, that his application for permission to proceed is granted or refused as the case may be, and if the application is granted, shall state in writing, the terms of any requirements which they wish to impose.
4. An aggrieved applicant by the neglect or refusal of a local authority to grant permission, or by any requirement imposed, may appeal to the Minister, whose decision shall be final. (18)

These points, together with others in the Order helped to lay the basis for modern development control practice. The common local government method of using by-laws to control development gradually meshed into and finally gave way to the use of planning applications. In March, 1922, the Ministry of Health issued local authorities with sets of Model Forms of Permission in an attempt to bring greater uniformity to the procedure. These are shown in Appendix 1.

## Regional Town Planning

The other major departure in the 1920s was the facilitation of co-operation in town planning between local authorities. Under the 1919 Act local authorities were permitted to establish Joint Town Planning Committees. These could act as either advisory bodies or could be invested with executive powers if the constituent authorities so wished. This feature of the Act had been much sought after by leading professional town planners.<sup>(19)</sup> They recognised the obvious pitfalls of neighbouring authorities, often in the same built-up area, pursuing their own separate Schemes. To obviate this, many planners advocated regional planning. High on the list of such advocates was Patrick Geddes.<sup>(20)</sup> The facilitation of Joint Town Planning Committees was hailed as an important aspect of regional planning. However, in practice, few if any of the Joint Town Planning Committees, were sufficiently large to be called 'regional'. Only the Midlands J.T.P.C., and the Manchester J.T.P.C., could be said to have achieved a regional scale.<sup>(21)</sup> Notwithstanding this, the mechanism of Joint Committees was widely taken up in the 1920s and undoubtedly improved the quality and co-ordination of town planning proposals. Three Joint Town Planning Committees were eventually established in the Teesside/Hartlepool area between 1920 and 1927 and these are examined in case studies described later.

## Assessing the 1919 Act

The context of the 1919 Act is one of dichotomy between appearance and reality. The appearance was deliberately portrayed as a new departure for a new age; a reconstruction of society. Town Planning may have been a minor actor on this stage but it was nevertheless in the same production. The reality was that the main ideological underpinning of



the Act was similar to previous social reform legislation whose central purpose was not to effect a major reconstruction of society but to ameliorate the hardships and create a more harmonious set of social relationships. The main framers of this approach in 1917-1920 were liberals and moderate socialists not revolutionaries. This is not to deny that the new legislation did not embody some important advances.

The 1919 amendments were quantitative rather than qualitative. They affected the pace and timing of town planning rather than the substance of the activity. The same basic land-use orientated approach remained. The emphasis still lay with the local authority preparing schemes which set out the main zones of land-use and lines of communication for land likely to be developed in the near future. The failure to make a more dynamic link between development and town planning remains to this day. From the point of view of the Treasury, town planning was, and is, a rather minor matter in the affairs of state. The official perception of town planning was that it was essentially a paper exercise designed to provide a framework for public and private investment; a regulator rather than an initiator. This lack of a positive, active role in the development process seemed to worry few town planners. Perhaps Raymond Unwin came closest when he commented in a Town Planning Institute discussion in 1917 that if the Ministry of Reconstruction were to consider town planning it ought to consider its relationship to industrial reconstruction and development which would involve a radical rethink.<sup>(22)</sup> But the Reconstruction Committees of the First World War failed to provide a fresh concept of town planning around which the more radical proponents of a 'New Britain' may have gathered.

The critical evaluation of pre-war town planning, conducted largely within the ranks of the town planning movement, had sought to stress the weakness in the application of the process rather than in any

fundamental concepts. Thus debates in the Town Planning Institute and elsewhere tended to talk about the need to 'speed up' the process or 'improve' aspects of the process.<sup>(23)</sup> Even the most divisive proposal abroad at the time, namely whether or not to make town planning a compulsory local authority activity was essentially about 'speeding up' the application of town planning. There were ideological implications about compulsion but these were not central to the debate. The emphasis of many in the profession was that town planning represented a new 'way of life' whose merits must be appreciated before proper adoption. This viewpoint prevailed throughout the 1920s and linked into the rather cosy interpretation of the basic correctness of the planning approach as laid down in 1909. But there were countervailing currents. The war experience and particularly the post-war euphoria helped to give a great impetus to the evangelical element in the town planning movement. Several key disciples occupied prominent positions in the state machine, notably George Pepler and Raymond Unwin. Arguably Pepler did more than any other single person to advance the practice of statutory town planning in this country through his incessant missionary work in the years immediately after the First World War.

The Regulations governing the 1919 Act, issued in 1921 with the amended clauses of the Act armed the likes of George Pepler with a simplified process. This, together with the authority of the new Ministry of Health, and a generalised hope of a post-war bonanza fuelled the expansion of town planning activity among the local authorities in England and Wales. Most of the early town planning exercises after 1919 occurred in industrial areas such as Teesside which were expected to witness massive new investment and growth. Spurred on by the Ministry of Health the local authorities in these areas were encouraged



to join together in Joint Town Planning committees to prepare plans for contiguous areas rather than separate local authority territories. It seems clear that the use of the joint town planning mechanism introduced town planning to a much wider and larger number of local authorities than would otherwise have been the case.

But in selling the idea of town planning to a wider local authority audience the ideology became noticeably more pragmatic. The vision of a romantic 'New Britain' was replaced with a more down to earth image of an 'Efficient Britain'. In the 'Efficient Britain', town planning was not posed as an alternative to free enterprise and competition but as a sensible and rational means of regulating and improving business. Even the more radical Garden Cities and Town Planning Association participated in promoting town planning along these lines. In a leaflet published in 1923 entitled, Town Planning, What it is and Why it is Needed, the first paragraph stated,

"Town planning is a means of saving, not spending, money. It aims at preventing disease, and therefore, promoting health; at preventing ugliness and preserving beauty; at preventing the growth of bad industrial conditions and therefore, safeguarding industrial efficiency. It is the application to social conditions of the principles of preventative medicine." (24)

The appeal in this leaflet and in much of town planning propaganda in the 1920s was to leaders of society in business and local government who were perceived, no doubt correctly, to be conservative and cautious. This leaflet is reproduced in Appendix 2.

In broader philosophical terms the notion of town planning as in some way being pivotal in creating a new form of society, i.e. a socialist society, was lost to the view of it being a part of helping the



established order achieve a renewed control on the basis of 'national reconciliation'. How far this was reflected at local level is examined in more detail in Part 5.

Part 2 has sought to establish the steps that were taken to place town planning on the statute book during the first two decades of the twentieth century. At the same time attention has also been given to the social, economic and political factors which gave rise to such legislation both long-term and short-term. In the long-term town planning is seen as part of a wider process of greater state intervention in the development process brought about primarily by the economic need to adjust the workings of a free-market economy which lacked the scope to handle growing changes to the urban system. Such needs became apparent towards the end of the nineteenth century. This is borne out by the way town planning was restricted in the first two statutes to the perceived area of greatest need for intervention - the fringes of towns and cities. This feature closely relates to Aim A of this study which is concerned to investigate the role and purpose of town planning in this country. It is also an important background for investigating Theme A which is about the ideology of town planning.

The more immediate focus of the Part has been to study in detail how the 1909 and 1919 Acts came to be passed, what the political circumstances were and what was the procedural content of the Acts. The broad initial conclusion to be drawn is that both Acts appeared to provide more than they actually did. This paradox between appearance and reality is due to the underlying purpose compared with the immediate political need to present an image of reform and reconstruction. This feature is far more evident in the 1919 Act than in 1909 but is present in both.

The basis for a more critical analysis of the role and purpose of the 1919 Act and its implementation is now established. Part 3 will seek to build on this base and explore how town planning related to wider social, economic and political forces in the period 1919-1933, that is, the period of operation of the second Town Planning Act.

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### **PART 3**

#### **THE CHANGING ECONOMIC, SOCIAL & POLITICAL CLIMATE FOR PLANNING 1919-1933**

- \* Chapter 8      Changing Britain in a Changing World, 1919 to 1933**
- \* Chapter 9      The Pressure for Planning - Controlling Growth**
- \* Chapter 10     The Pressure for Planning - The Social Case**
- \* Chapter 11     The Central & Local Government Framework for  
Planning**
- \* Chapter 12     Planning & the Political Debate**



## Chapter 8 - Changing Britain in a Changing World, 1919 to 1933

This Chapter is essentially concerned with scene-setting and is designed to provide important background material before considering the relationship of economic, social, administrative and political factors to the way town planning developed in this country in the 1920s and early 1930s. It is split into three sections; an overview which seeks to capture the flavour and spirit of the period; an economic review; and a survey of social conditions. This division is adopted in order to give special attention to these important features of national life, but it is recognised that this approach tends to underplay the inter-connections between such categories.

### (1) An Overview

The boundaries of this study are marked by two significant junctures in world history which have a reflection in British history too. The opening gate is marked by the end of the First World War and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. In the photographs of crowds in Germany which gathered to hear this news, eagle eyes have spotted a soldier called Adolf. The closing door to the study is the year 1933, when, as all the world knew, that same soldier, Adolf Hitler, became the new Chancellor of Germany. If the crowds in Germany were in somber mood in 1919, in Britain there was rejoicing and a desire to create a new society. By 1933 roles had reversed. In Germany, at least among those allowed to show their feelings, there was a resurgence of national pride and hope, while in Britain, it was a year of uncertainty following a period of financial and political crises of formidable proportions.

In presenting an overview of the period of this study two distinct phases are described. In the first, the 1920s are given a special

focus. In many ways they did constitute, socially and politically, a distinct era, dominated by thoughts of the war. By way of contrast, the period after this study, from 1933 to 1939, can be seen as flavoured by thoughts of war to come. In between, the social, economic and political crises of 1929 to 1931 and its immediate aftermath can usefully be treated separately as having a special influence on opinion and attitudes.

### The 1920s : A Curious Decade

The return of mass unemployment and the decline of many industries over the last few years has prompted several comparisons with the inter-war years. Invariably the period conjured up for such comparison is the 1930s. The trade union movement chose the popular image of that era to stir opposition to Government policies in the early 1980s, with the slogan, 'No Return to the 30s'. But the inter-war years comprise two decades and of the two the 1920s has become something of a forgotten decade, neglected by historians and commentators. This is a pity because the conditions and experiences of the 1920s gave birth to a wealth of ideas that have strongly influenced subsequent history. While the 1930s may appear to offer a richer and more colourful panoply of events at home and abroad there were few of these that did not owe their origin to the 1920s. The rise of Hitler and Nazism may have burst on the stage in the 1930s but the script was written in the 1920s, even in a literal sense with the publication of Mein Kampf in 1928. Similarly, the contortions of Stalinism may have caused sensations in the 1930s but the 'Thermidor' of the Russian Revolution occurred in the 1920s. (1) At home several historians have pointed to the emergence in the 1930s of what Arthur Marwick calls 'middle opinion'. (2) By this he means the intellectual roots of what came to be called 'Butskellism', which can be located in, inter alia, the

works of H. Macmillan, The Middle Way, (1930) and E. Durban The Politics of Democratic Socialism, (1940). But such a current of thought had begun much earlier and produced statements of interest such as Industry and the State, published in 1927 by a group of Tory M.P's, R. Boothby, H. Macmillan, J. Loder and O. Stanley, nicknamed the 'Y.M.C.A.'. A year later the Liberal Party published their famous 'Yellow Book', called Britain's Industrial Future. To some extent such viewpoints could be seen reflected in the 'Mond-Turner' accord between some employers and the Trades Union Congress in the late 1920s.<sup>(3)</sup> This theme is studied further in a later Chapter.

Nor were the 1920s simply years in which seeds matured in the ground. In the field of creative arts the ending of World War One and the consequent social upheavals throughout Europe produced a ferment of ideas in the arts and philosophy. Picasso's Three Musicians (1921), signified a high point of cubism. Diaghilev's ballet productions set to Stravinsky's music rocked conventional tastes in the 1920s.<sup>(4)</sup> In the world of film Charles Chaplin, in films like Goldrush (1925), was outstanding and in direction few have ever matched the skills of the Russian director Eisenstein in his film, Battleship Potemkin (1928). In architecture, modernism was born in the 1920s through the stylish Bauhaus School of Gropius and Mies Van Der Rohe and in the more menacing futurism of Le Corbusier. Closer to home works by Bertrand Russell, What I Believe (1925) and Sceptical Essays (1928) and R. Tawney, Acquisitive Society (1921) proved of lasting influence. And few can deny the seminal influence of Freud's works, many of which first appeared in the 1920s, e.g. Introductory lectures in Psychoanalysis (1922). The evidence could be multiplied using other subjects and other illustrious names. Suffice it to say that the 1920s was not a dull decade, nor a dormant one, for Britain, or



elsewhere in the world. Rather it was a decade seething with ideas, often struggling against a social and political background of great conservatism. This notion of duality or ambivalence in the decade has been picked up by several commentators. C.L. Mowat expresses his view thus:

"....stability, more evident in some parts of the national scene than others, but never absent, and change, intruding everywhere, particularly in material conditions, but never all triumphant. Things seemed the same but were not, as if one were being carried imperceptibly elsewhere while apparently remaining stationary, the opposite of the Red Queen's predicament."(5)

Stability is certainly a strong theme used by historians to describe Britain in the 1920s. In many respects Britain appeared largely unchanged. In particular the class system and its accompanying distribution of wealth seemed impervious to change, though in reality there were important marginal increases in social mobility towards the end of the decade. In politics the Conservative Party was essentially in power throughout the decade, although not always directly in office. From 1922 to 1929 it enjoyed substantial majorities in the House of Commons, except for a few months in 1924 when Ramsay MacDonald led Labour's first minority government. In the tempestuous years 1918 to 1922 it held a majority of seats, but substantial numbers of Tory M.P's were wedded to the charismatic leadership of Lloyd George and a Coalition Government ruled. The financial approach of all Governments after 1920 was based on what we would today call 'monetarism'. That is, each Chancellor of the decade, including Labour's Snowden, based his budget on what was then called 'sound money principles', such as keeping a tight rein on government expenditure and trying to maintain a strong pound. After 1925 Britain returned to the pre-war gold standard

which in effect overvalued sterling. When these policies were set against the slump in world trade and the return of mass unemployment the results for most working people were to depress their standards of living. Only by dampening inflation and ultimately causing prices to fall were standards retrieved and in some areas improved in the later 1920s.

The 1920s then was a curious decade. To some like Ethel Mannin, an accomplished novelist and archetypal 'Bohemian' it was a fantastic time described by her as 'amoral', 'gay', 'bright', and 'roaring'.<sup>(6)</sup> For the young with money it was certainly a fun decade. The challenge to convention did not, however, go unresisted. Both D.H. Lawrence's Lady Chatterley's Lover (1922) and R. Aldington's Death of a Hero (1929) had to be expurgated to satisfy the Censor, and other books were banned.<sup>(7)</sup>

But if all-night parties and 'flappers' constitute one element of 1920s society they were more than offset by what has been called, the irreducible army of the unemployed. The unemployed became a permanent feature of the 1920s, with never less than 1 million of them at any time. It was on the rocks of unemployment that the vibrant hopes of radical trade unionism foundered, first in 1921 ('Black Friday')<sup>(8)</sup> and finally in the big showdown of the 1926 General Strike. The most active among the unemployed tried to fight back and were organised by the largely Communist-led, National Unemployed Workers' Movement. The first national hunger march was organised by the N.U.W.M. in 1922.<sup>(9)</sup> Such marches were to be a recurring event in the 1920s - a painful reminder of poverty in the midst of growing affluence among certain sections of the community. Such poverty was especially acute in the distressed areas of Wales, Scotland and the North where the traditional export industries were in such decline. Such areas contrasted sharply

to the growing areas of the South and the Midlands where developing suburbs and increased car ownership gave a glimpse of the future preoccupations of town planners. Even the less prosperous areas could not escape the influence of ever expanding road traffic. Part of that traffic was a reflection of the growth in leisure pursuits that became a feature of the 1920s and found other reflections in the cinema, radio and holidays.

### The Crisis Years, 1929-1933

The years 1929 to 1933 witnessed scenes of crisis all around the world. The crisis was one that embraced all aspects of social, economic and political life. For countries founded on capitalism and bound together closely by financial and trade links the system suffered acute dislocation caused by a combination of over-production, industrial re-structuring and a loss of confidence in the market place. The shock waves of emergency, beginning in New York in 1929 with the famous Wall Street crash, reverberated around Europe, South America and the colonial nations.<sup>(10)</sup> As trade slumped unemployment rose to huge proportions. Political arrangements everywhere came under pressure for change, and extreme parties of the left and right made rapid inroads into popular opinion. Scarcely any country in the world could claim stability in these years. In China civil war raged, in Germany the Nazis continued their inexorable rise, in France Communists and Fascists grew in numbers, in Poland the autocratic Pilsudski came to power and even in the U.S.S.R., although unconnected with the capitalist crisis, convulsive social change in the form of forced collectivisation was spelling famine and death for many millions. The seeming stability of the 1920s became well and truly buried! Moreover, the social, scientific and cultural changes noted as a



feature of the 1920s continued unabated in the early 1930s. Not only were the new inventions and styles of the 20s gaining wider popular availability but new variations were being born. Electricity was continuing to transform daily life. This was reflected in the popularity of the magazine, The Electrical Age. Even the B.B.C. in 1931 yielded to the new interest and permitted a talk on, 'How to get the best out of an electric cooker'. The radio was an almost universal item of domestic equipment in the average British home by 1933. The 'Art Deco' movement succeeded in challenging the functionalism of Bauhaus as the most popular style for clothes, furniture and bric-a-brac. Its bright assertiveness was a welcome counterpoint to the mood of worry and upheaval. Research into new materials in the early 1930s was to provide further major changes to everyday life in the late part of the decade. New light alloys were being developed mainly as offshoots of industries such as the aircraft and motor industry. In the chemical industry even more far reaching inventions in plastics and polymers were being patented in the period 1929 to 1933.

Artists in all fields reflected these changing and dangerous times. Of special note is that many intellectuals in this period began to be far more politically aware and committed than in the 1920s.<sup>(11)</sup> Pacifism was a strong current from bitter experiences in the First World War and continued to provide an inspiration to many writers in the early 1930s. One of the most famous books to emerge from that genre was Robert Graves 'Goodbye To All That', published in 1930. Political unrest, social disharmony and the marching armies of the unemployed and hungry attracted considerable attention from writers and poets many of whom became involved in left wing politics. W.H. Auden, who was to become one of the leading 'political poets' with Spender, published his

first book in 1930, called simply, 'Poems'. In 1933 an anthology of poems entitled, 'New Country' was characteristic in its title and in its content of the new, committed approach of British poets.

Novelists and commentators also showed a heightened social concern. J.B. Priestley portrayed a sympathy for those living at the margins in 'Angel Pavement' (1930) which was followed up with a vivid documentary book, 'English Journey' (1933). In a similar vein George Orwell expressed the suffering of the forgotten elements in society in 'Down and Out in Paris and London' (1933). In the same year Arthur Greenwood published his devastating and haunting novel, 'Love on the Dole'.

The high point of the movement among intellectuals to left-wing politics came in 1936 which witnessed the start of the Spanish Civil War, the Jarrow Crusade at home and the emergence of Popular Frontism as a new policy turn of the Communist Party. In the field of arts 1936 saw the start of the Left Book Club, the first appearance of New Writing, a major Surrealist exhibition and the consolidation of Left Theatre organisations. But many of these features saw beginnings in the 1929-33 period. A key text for the left was John Strachey's 'The Coming Struggle for Power', published in 1932. The Group Theatre was founded in 1932 and the Artists' International Association in 1933.

For Britain the crisis years began in 1929 with high hopes for social change and an end to unemployment, then topping two million. The height was reached in 1931 when unemployment seemed to be about to hit the three million mark and Labour's Government crumpled under the external pressure of the Bank of England and the internal desertion of Ramsey MacDonald. By 1933 the political ferment had died down and the National Government, secure in its enormous Parliamentary majority settled into a groove that was to remain largelyunjolted until Hitler's tanks rumbled into Poland in 1939.

## (ii) An Economic Review

For the purposes of economic analysis the period 1919 to 1933 can be divided into three phases; first, the relatively short lived post-war boom which lasted until 1921; secondly a protected period of sluggish and uneven development when some sectors of industry exhibited fast rates of growth while staple industries went into absolute decline; and finally the economic and financial crisis of 1929 to 1932/3 when trade and industry slumped and unemployment reached major proportions. As a preface to these successive economic phases there is a need to consider the economic legacy of the First World War.

### The Economic Impact of War

The long-term economic effects of the First World War are not easy to isolate. In overall terms industrial production did not greatly suffer. By the end of the war production was at 91% of the 1913 level, due largely to the use of female and juvenile labour.<sup>(13)</sup> Naturally the armaments industry and related industries like iron and steel increased production. There was also an increased investment in industries that could aid the war effort such as chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and science-based developments such as radio and electrical goods. The stimulation to these new industries and to the emerging motor vehicle and aircraft industries were to have a lasting effect on the post-war economy.

The loss of manpower, initially made up by increased female labour, was to have only a short-lived impact on post-war Britain so far as output and production was concerned. The ramifications of losing so many young men were chiefly social and cultural.



The distortions of operating a war-economy were several. On the financial front it became necessary to increase borrowing on a gigantic scale and the National Debt rose from £650,000 to £8 billion.(14) Britain moved swiftly from a creditor nation to a debtor nation and was forced off the gold standard. Sterling was still powerful but had lost its pre-eminent position to the dollar. Visions of old glory led the monetarists of post-war Britain to re-instate the Gold Standard in 1925.(15) This led to an overvaluation of sterling, therefore, inhibiting exports, until the financial crisis of 1931/2, when Britain came off the Gold Standard once again. In terms of economic structure the war undoubtedly stimulated some of the new 'growth' sectors but it also led to an over-emphasis on the old 'staple' industries that were so vital to the war effort.(16) Part of the long term economic problem of the British economy was an over-commitment to such industries as iron and steel, cotton and shipbuilding. The war distorted still further this reliance on, what was to become, an increasingly competitive international market.(17) At the same time the diversion within basic industries and shipping to meet the home needs of war led to a dramatic fall in exports. The gap was eagerly filled by Britain's rivals, the U.S.A., Germany and Japan. After the war Britain was never able to recoup its old trading position.(18)

### The Post-War Boom

All of these problems were far from easy to perceive at the time. In the euphoria of peace many difficulties were hidden by a rapid but short-lived boom. The boom was fuelled by the need to re-establish old trade and to replace the losses of war-time. It was also a time of rising prices and a release of accumulated profits. In this heady atmosphere substantial investments were made in industries which were already suffering over-capacity such as shipbuilding and cotton. New shipyards were still being laid down in the 1918 to 1920 period.(19)

## Growth and Decline, 1921-1929

The boom collapsed as quickly as it had begun and with it the post-war hopes for a period of sustained economic fortune. The two years 1921 and 1922 saw a rapid shrinking of trade with a commensurate fall in exports and production.<sup>(20)</sup> Exports of cotton textiles had fallen by 1922 to less than half of that for 1913. Coal exports also plummeted to one third of the 1913 situation and coal production was cut by 40 million tons. Other industries that relied heavily on world trade also shrank.<sup>(21)</sup> As a consequence unemployment rose to almost 2 million by June 1921.

Following the sharp slump of 1921/3, there was some recovery but between 1923 and 1929 the economy remained in the doldrums due largely to unsettled and sluggish international trade. World trade had grown by at least 25% every decade between 1830 and 1914 but during the 1920s it grew by only 8½%.<sup>(22)</sup> In this tougher overseas market British exports did badly, especially in the old staple industries. In contrast the newer industries expanded and, with mounting house construction after 1924, the building industry also experienced substantial growth.<sup>(23)</sup> There was a marked regional imbalance in the pattern of growth and decline, with the areas traditionally associated with the older staple industries of coal, iron and steel, shipbuilding, heavy engineering and the textile industries suffering contraction and those areas which attracted the new industries expanding. There was a broad North-South divide to this pattern, with growth generally confined to the area around London and the Midlands. Elsewhere, Wales, Scotland, the North-East, the North-West and parts of Yorkshire became very depressed with high rates of unemployment. The social consequences of this re-structuring process are discussed in Section (iii) of this Chapter.

## The Great Crisis Years, 1929-33

The gathering crisis of world trade led to a severe financial crisis in America in 1929 that sent shock waves around the world. The 1929 Wall Street crash was eventually to precipitate an echoing crash in Britain in 1931.<sup>(24)</sup> World trade slumped by 35% between 1929 and 1933, the worst depression for over 100 years.<sup>(25)</sup> In Britain the main effect was to push unemployment up to nearly 3 million, or over 20%. This, in turn led to a massive burden on public spending producing the financial and political crisis of 1931. The new National Government of 1931 chose to impose harsh deflationary policies as a means of appeasing foreign bankers and implementing their own monetarist position. Public spending was reduced through reductions in unemployment insurance payments, reduced public sector pay and cuts in local government grants. The depression in world trade caused immense hardship and very high levels of unemployment in the old industrial areas. Steel output was halved between 1929 and 1931. Shipbuilding which had already been reduced by a half between 1923 and 1930 was virtually totally eclipsed in 1931 and 1932. In this last year only 133,000 tons of shipping were built. Coal output fell by a fifth between 1929 and 1933 and cotton exports were halved in the same period.<sup>(26)</sup>

These then are the main periods by which the economic fortunes of Britain can be charted between the end of the First World War and 1933. Such an analysis only provides the framework of the most obvious economic changes. Appendix 3 contains some further detail on structural changes and aspects of growth.

### (iii) The Social Condition of Britain, 1919-1933

This section seeks to show how the social condition of Britain was revealed by social scientists and social observers in the 1920s and



early 1930s. A long tradition of recording social traditions was established during the nineteenth century and provided essential evidence for successive attempts at social reform. The primary message from such Victorian surveys was that the overwhelming cause of poor health and short-life expectancy was the appalling physical conditions in which so many working class people were forced to live. It was on this evidence that much of the case for housing reform and the need for town planning was originally based. The results of surveys into social conditions during the 1920s and early 1930s tended to shift the debate to issues of income and work. Continued physical problems in poor housing and ill-organised towns and cities were recognised but greater focus was given to low incomes and lack of work as a primary cause of poverty and ill-health. Unemployment became increasingly recognised as the main social issue of the day.

This section considers what social surveys began to reveal in the 1920s and then looks specifically at studies on unemployment, health and the emergency of more comprehensive social studies. Finally the more anecdotal, but often stimulating, views of contemporary observers are presented.

### Social Surveys and Social Studies

The first post-war social survey of note made its impact in 1925 when Professor Bowley published the results of his Five Towns Survey called, 'Has Poverty Diminished?'.<sup>(27)</sup> In this Bowley compared his survey undertaken in 1923/24, with an earlier survey of his in the same towns, conducted in 1912 and with Rowntrees' work in York of 1899.<sup>(28)</sup> Bowley found that, on his yardstick, primary poverty had halved due to a rise in real wages and a lowering of the size of the average family. On a less positive note he also found that unemployment as a cause of

poverty was on the increase. Bowley's work stimulated a new interest in social surveys. In 1928, the London School of Economics started work on a new survey of London Life and Labour,<sup>(29)</sup> forty years after Charles Booth's original surveys of that name.<sup>(30)</sup> The new London survey confirmed Bowley's general findings on poverty. In addition they also found that progress on housing conditions was very slow with overcrowding and poor conditions still rife. As well as the initiative of the London School of Economics in London other universities were also doing serious social investigations. The most noteworthy of them was the Merseyside Survey begun in 1929.<sup>(31)</sup> The Merseyside survey pioneered many new techniques in social survey methods. Its conclusions mirrored the other surveys in showing that poverty was largely concentrated in households where the chief earner was unemployed or where there was no longer an adult male earner.

These surveys provided the evidence in the localities that poverty was not nearly so bad as in the pre-war years but that nevertheless, enormous problems remained. Other studies of particular aspects of the social condition sharpened awareness of specific problems such as unemployment and health.

### Unemployment

On unemployment, J.J. Astor and others aroused notice of the problem as early as 1922 with publication of 'The Third Winter of Unemployment'.<sup>(32)</sup> But there was a lull in further studies until the 1930s when a spate of publications began to bring home to people the particular problems of life on the dole. Most notable among these were E.W. Bakke's, 'The Unemployed Man', 1933. <sup>(33)</sup> Beales and Lambert's, 'Memoirs of the Unemployed', 1934,<sup>(34)</sup> and 'Men without Work', 1938, by the Pilgrim Trust.<sup>(35)</sup> Perhaps the most impact was made by a novel

already referred to, 'Love on the Dole' written by Walter Greenwood in 1933.

### Health

Health did not feature strongly as a specific issue in the 1920s partly because it was seen as linked to other factors. But during the 1930s a number of influential works highlighted the stubborn presence of poor health among the poorer sections of the population. Both diet and poverty generally were seen as related to this particular problem. Although outside this period it is important to note that in 1936 Dr. M'Gonigle and J. Kirby published 'Poverty and Public Health', which advanced the thesis that environment was not the only factor influencing public health.<sup>(36)</sup> They stressed the crucial role of diet and sought to prove that poor diet was at the root of most health problems. To back this view up they used a local case study based on Stockton-on-Tees where M'Gonigle was Medical Officer of Health. In monitoring a move of tenants from a slum area to a new planned estate M'Gonigle found that far from improving health the move worsened it. Death rates were actually higher on the new estate as well as the incidence of illnesses. The explanation was that the higher rents on the new estate compelled the residents to cut back on essential food. The poorer diet left the tenants more vulnerable to disease and death.

### Comprehensive Studies

Overall pictures of the social condition of Britain emerged mainly after 1933 when authors had time to assimilate the evidence and reach judgement based on hindsight. But there were some early attempts to present a scientific approach by setting out the statistical evidence. A.M. Carr-Saunders and D. Caradog Jones produced a very valuable book in 1929 called 'A Survey of the Social Structure of England and



Wales'.<sup>(37)</sup> Utilising the wealth of official statistics the book presents a comprehensive survey of the population, occupations and wealth as well as crime and poverty. A second edition of this book was brought out in 1937. In the same year G.D.H. and M.I. Cole published their book, 'The Condition of Britain'.<sup>(38)</sup> This book was a more polemical work than Carr-Saunders and Jones' but it was also more comprehensive and made wide use of statistics.

The emphasis of many works on the social conditions of people in Britain in the inter-war years was to highlight the problems rather than present a balanced overview. As the 1930s advanced, political frustration with the National Government grew. The failure of the state to make major inroads into the two nations of the country by rectifying the poverty and problems of large numbers of working class people aroused intense hostility. The received picture of those years has, therefore, tended to be coloured by many of these works. In recent years a number of writers have sought to give a more balanced view of the social condition of the country during the inter-war years. These works do not seek to attack the evidence of the social surveys of the period but they try to place them within an overall context that was sometimes missing in the originals. In concentrating upon the problems of unemployment, poor health and distressed areas the general picture can be lost. Two recent surveys help to give an up-to-date assessment, S. Constantin's 'Social Conditions in Britain, 1918-1939' (1983) and 'British Society, 1914-1945' (1984), by J. Stevenson.<sup>(39)</sup> They show that overall standards were rising in the inter-war years despite large residual problems.

### The Observer's Eye

This section has concentrated upon the growing role of social science

methods in understanding and recording conditions in Britain in the 20s and 30s. But of value too are the impressionistic accounts. In 1940 Robert Graves and Alan Hodge published 'The Long Weekend, A Social History of Great Britain, 1918-1939' (40) which colours in the outlines provided by social surveys. Vivid direct accounts of life among the poor and unemployed were also provided by George Orwell, 'The Road to Wigan Pier', 1936, (41) and the curious titled, 'The Near-by Thing', 1933, (42) written by a Times reporter, William Teeling, about his experiences moving about the country pretending to be unemployed. One of the most outstanding general impressions of the state of Britain in the early 1930s was left by J.B. Priestley in 'English Journey'. (43) In summing up his perambulations around the British Isles he defined three main Englands that he saw,

"There was, first, the Old England, the country of the cathedrals and minsters and manor houses and inns, of Parson and Squire; guide book and quaint highways and byways England.... Then, I decided, there is the nineteenth-century England, the industrial England of coal, iron, steel, cotton, wool, railways; of thousands of rows of little houses all alike, sham Gothic churches, square-faced chapels, Town Halls, Mechanics' Institutes, mills, foundries, warehouses..... a cynically devastated countryside, sooty dismal little towns and still sootier grim fortress-like cities. This England makes up the larger part of the Midlands and the North and exists everywhere; but it is not being added to and has no new life poured into it.... The third England, I concluded, was the new post-war England belonging far more to the age itself than to this particular island. America, I supposed, was its real birthplace. This is the England of arterial and by-pass roads,

of filling stations and factories that look like exhibition buildings, of giant cinemas and dancehalls and cafes, bungalows with tiny garages, cocktail bars, Woolworths, motor coaches, wireless, hiking, factory girls looking like actresses, greyhound racing and dirt tracks, swimming pools and everything given away for cigarette coupons." (44)

This chapter has sought to provide a broad context for the more detailed examination of the key forces pressing for more planning in British society between 1919 and 1933. The next four chapters will consider more specific contexts for planning generally and town planning in terms of: economic; social; administrative; and political. Within each of these contexts areas of pressure for planning will be examined. These were not even forces and the degree to which they were successful or not helped to shape the immediate outcome for planning and, as will be shown in Chapter 15, helped determine the way in which the second Town Planning Act was implemented and its objectives met. In the longer term the relative strengths of these forces help to illustrate the reality of town planning in contemporary British society.

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16. Stevenson, J. op.cit. p.106.
17. Ibid p.106.
18. Ibid p.106, 107.
19. Ibid p.107. Example of expanding shipping capacity in Teesside are as follows:  
  
On the River Tees Lord Furness created a new shipyard at Haverton Hill in 1918 and Smith's Dock was expanded, work beginning in 1917 but not becoming operational until 1918. A third yard was built in 1918 at Graythorpe in Greatham Creek near Hartlepool by Sir William Gray.
20. The value of exports fell 47.9% and imports by 43.7%, in 1921, as compared with 1920. In 1922 exports recovered by 1.7% but imports declined further by 7.5%. Figures quoted in Mowat, C.L. op.cit. p.125.
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## Chapter 9 - The Pressure for Planning - Controlling Growth

The arguments presented in this chapter and the following one possess closely inter-related strands of economic drives and social consequences. They are concerned with assessing the pressures on governments to adopt planning as both an economic and social mechanism for dealing with growth and decline. They are also concerned to stress the relationship between the wider concept of planning and the narrower one of town planning.

The view is taken that the need to exert some form of control on the mainsprings of economic growth and its consequences for development provided the primary impetus behind both greater state intervention in the British economy and in pursuing town planning. On the other hand, the social argument for planning proved less successful, although not completely without impact or consequence.

This chapter, then, will examine the reaction of governments between 1919 and 1933 to the problems posed by economic growth and how this was seen to impact on town planning. Two specific examples of how the state sought to intervene with regard to electric power supply and motor transport, both vital aspects of economic growth, are considered in some detail. The relationship of these service sectors to town planning is also dealt with. Finally, the chapter concludes by examining whether the same purpose that governed state intervention in the service industries detailed here also underpinned their approach to the control of land-use through statutory town planning. As a preface to these details a general consideration is given to the way governments have historically intervened in the British economy.

### State Intervention in the British Economy

The onset of capitalism in Britain ended the long involvement of the

state and Crown in various aspects of the British economy.<sup>(1)</sup> For much of the nineteenth century the role of the state in British industry was negligible, it being seen as essentially untenable in a market-led economy governed by a laissez-faire philosophy. This position gradually broke down as the problems of the British economy exceeded the capacity of the market to provide satisfactory solutions and, because the growth of democracy lent a political urgency to prevent or ameliorate the most severe consequences of industrial growth and contraction.

Intervention in the processes of economic growth and change could take several forms. The state could act as originator of new industrial processes and be the prime investor. This has rarely been a feature of capitalist economies and generally only occurs in war-time. More commonly the state can take over, or nationalise, existing industries or business concerns and run them as state corporations. As an alternative to ownership the state can act to encourage change, such as the rationalisation of industries, through the provision of grants, loans and legal frameworks. There are a host of variations to these main mechanisms as there are also a numbers of fiscal and trading techniques to assist industry that is in difficulty. All of these options have been exercised by British governments in the twentieth century.

In Britain the first major interventions of this sort occurred during the First World War. Under the crisis conditions of war, state controls were established over a number of industries including coal, munitions, railways, shipping and agriculture. From the point of view of innovation and state investment the munitions and allied chemical industries were the prime example. By the end of the war the Ministry of Munitions employed a staff of 65,000, controlled over three and a

half million workers, ran directly 250 factories, quarries and mines and supervised 20,000 'controlled' establishments.(2) As part of its work the Ministry was also involved in establishing new prototype chemical factories in a bid to match German expertise. In one such venture the government established an experimental plant to try and fix nitrogen from the atmosphere and located it in Billingham on the north bank of the River Tees. The subsequent privatisation of this plant and its emergence as part of the I.C.I. combine is related in Appendix 5. The way I.C.I. Billingham reacted to statutory town planning will be considered in some detail in Part 5.

After the war the government moved rapidly to de-control industry and to end most forms of direct intervention. The rationing of food was ended in 1919 and 1920 and price controls mainly ceased in 1920.(3) Those controls exercised by the War Office and the Board of Trade were allowed to run out in 1919 as were controls on shipping. Ten new ministries and 160 new boards and commissions had come into existence in the war. Three of these ministries, the Ministries of Munitions, Shipping and Food, were abolished in 1921 and many of the boards had also disappeared by then. The control of the railways and coalmines continued until 1921. The government also got rid of hoards of 'war surplus' goods and sold some 105 factories built under the Ministry of Munitions' aegis during the war. The haste and thoroughness with which this de-control process was carried out reflected the substantial number of Conservative Members of Parliament who desired a return to normality and pre-war conditions. It was also a reaction to a considerable press campaign.(4)

As the 1920s progressed so the process of government intervention in the economy slowly re-asserted itself. The relationship of this intervention to economic growth was primarily one of controlling and



assisting the development process and is thus of direct relevance to town planning. There were substantial new sectors of growth in the British economy in the 1920s, particularly in chemicals, consumer goods and the motor industry. There was no economic reason for the government to intervene in such industries, from a capitalist point of view. On the other hand, there was a need to ensure that the ramifications of new growth and new forms of power and transport did not create waste, congestion and social problems. It is suggested that such concerns led to new controls, direction and investment in the British economy in the 1920s and early 1930s.

The introduction of statutory town planning in Edwardian Britain can be seen primarily as resting on a desire to control the growth of potential new suburban developments. This new growth was the result of improvements in transport, some marginal but significant redistribution of wealth in favour of lower income groups and lower housing densities. The continuation of statutory town planning in 1919 when so many other features of intervention were being ended points to the continuing relevance of this theme after the war. However, new development pressures in the post-war period were to highlight the inadequacy of town planning legislation and may have aided the introduction of new policies of intervention.

The new development pressures were manifest in the increasing expansion of towns and cities, especially London and Birmingham and the tendency for new industries to locate in the South-East and the Midlands with a consequent shift in the distribution of population between Regions.<sup>(5)</sup>

The cause of these new pressures arose mainly from the growing influence of motorised transport, both public bus and private car and the increasing use by industry of electric power. Both introduced new elements aiding mobility, whereas existing forms of power and transport

were more restrictive. Coal power tended to encourage industry to locate near or on the main coalfields or near railways. Electric power offered substantial freedom from such constraints. In transportation, the railways, canals and docks were all tied to fixed lines or points of communication. Motor transport was much more flexible and could serve industry and communities in a relatively free manner.(6)

The social consequences of these new features were substantial, particularly for the steadily growing middle-class and the better-off working-class. It was from these groups that a growing demand for new housing arose, preferably housing in a country setting on the very edge of existing towns. Towards the end of the study period there was also a growing demand for retirement homes by the sea or in rural tranquility. These same social classes, together with the high income groups, were also demanding new electrical goods to save labour in the home, and by the more affluent, the new 'popular' Ford and Morris motor cars. This in turn fuelled the rise of industry geared to consumer demand and such industry, basing itself on electric power, could and did locate near its main markets in the South-East and the Midlands.

Government intervention in electric power supply and motor transport was undertaken in order to control the situation and facilitate the widespread use of these facilities. The particular way this came about is discussed next.

#### (i) Electricity Supply Industry

The impact of electricity was revolutionary. Not only did it have a major influence on the location of industry and the development of modern consumerist society, as has been outlined, but it also changed the entertainment and leisure activities of people. However, its development was by no means even. Electricity supply was provided by a



multitude of private companies and local authorities in the early years. This led to considerable chaos. Even within towns different localities were supplied with different voltages. During the 1920s in Britain there were 23 different kinds of plugs for electric fires.(7)

The number of consumers of electricity rose dramatically in the study period from 730,000 in 1920 to almost 9 million in the early 1930s.

In 1920 only 1 house in 17 was wired for electricity. By 1930 the ratio had risen to 1 in 3 and by 1932, 2 houses out of 3.(8) Given this growth in domestic use it is not surprising that there was a boom in the sales of electric goods including vacuum cleaners, electric fires, refrigerators, cookers and radio sets. In addition, the number of factories based on electric power grew dramatically too, particularly after the development of small, efficient electric motors.(9)

These developments ensured that occupations in electrical manufacturing should be among the most buoyant of industries in the 1920s and early 1930s. Out of 12 industries which recorded the most relative increase in terms of employment between 1923 and 1938, 3 were electrical-based.(10)

### Post-War Rationalisation

Bold attempts to rationalise the industry after the First World War were defeated by Conservatives in the House of Commons. In their 1918 programme the Labour Party had advocated the nationalisation of the supply industry which had a wide measure of support. But opposition forced the Coalition Government to modify their initial plans to regulate the industry by means of public boards. Instead the Electricity Supply Act of 1919 set up Electricity Commissioners to supervise the permissive co-ordination between supply undertakings on a



regional basis. This attempt to attain voltage co-ordination was not a success. Pressure for change and control built up in the 1920s. In 1924 the short-lived Labour Government proposed standardising the frequencies of electricity but the proposal fell with the demise of that government. Lloyd George sponsored his own committee to consider the problems of electricity supply within the broader context of power needs. The published report, 'Coal and Power' (1924) helped to influence opinion. (11) In 1925 the Government set up its own committee under Lord Weir and it was this committee which proposed setting up a public corporation to run the electricity supply industry. (12)

### Government Intervention

The Electricity (Supply) Act, 1926, which set up the Central Electricity Board was a significant new departure for post-war governments. It was, in effect, the first major piece of legislation in the inter-war years that could be said to form part of a more managed approach to capitalism. Other examples of this approach included the British Broadcasting Corporation (1926), Agricultural Marketing Boards (1931, 1933), London Passenger Transport Board (1933), and the British Overseas Airways Corporation (1939).

The powers conferred on the Central Electricity Board enabled them to rationalise the large number of small, inefficient power stations and to obtain concentration in a small number of stations operated under its control. The stations remained in the possession of the owners, but the Board agreed to buy the whole output and sell it at an agreed price to the various distributors. Since this was done in bulk, the geographical limitations as to where supply could be given by the Board had been abolished, the effect was that the Board bought from the

most efficient stations, encouraging large new developments.

The Board was also given power to construct a national 'grid' of high tension transmission lines throughout the country. Thus the Board acted essentially as a clearing house. The national grid of power lines, supported very often by high pylons, was a major state investment. Over £27 million was spent by the Central Electricity Board on this task in the later 20s and early 30s.(13)

The other important duty of the Central Electricity Board was to standardise frequency throughout Britain with a view to effective inter-connection and a reduction in waste and confusion. This was achieved slowly during the study period.

The intervention of the state undoubtedly assisted the spread of electric power in this country. The completion of the national grid by 1933 ensured an orderly and planned distribution of electricity to the whole country.

#### Remaining Problems

Easier access to electricity could bring its penalties as the P.E.P's, Report on the Location of Industry in Great Britain (1939) pointed out. Because it was the statutory right of an individual to demand supply if he was within a certain distance of an existing main then there was no effective control on the call on electrical resources, rendering planning by the electrical distributors somewhat hazardous.(14)

Despite the great gains made by the electrical industry and its very great influence on productivity and way of life there still remained many who were critical of the lack of progress in this area.

The main charge made was that this country still lagged behind its economic rivals, Germany and the U.S.A. The 'Yellow Book' (1928) pointed out that despite a rapid increase in electrical output in Britain in terms of output per head, Britain was still fourth from the bottom in a league of industrial nations.(15) R.T. Clark of the British Electrical and Allied Manufacturers' Association pointed out that industrial electrification in this country was still incomplete and on a lower scale than in America or Germany mainly because British industrialists were slower than their rivals to appreciate that electricity was the cheapest and most efficient source of power. Clark also bemoaned the slow rate of progress in railway electrification.(16)

Much still remained to be done in the distribution of electricity. In the early 1930s there were over 600 authorised electricity undertakings in Britain, over 240 of which were owned by private companies, 370 by municipal authorities and 3 by joint electrical authorities.(17)

### Electricity & Town Planning

From a town planning point of view the impact of the availability of a cheap source of power on the location of industry and hence both local land use and broader regional distributions were not widely realised within the profession. One of the few who did appreciate the long term significance of such developments was W.H. McLean who referred to the issue in his book, 'Regional and Town Planning (1930),

"...with transmission lines all over the country, the rural districts could be supplied with cheap power; in this way industries might be encouraged and employment provided there, thus relieving the congestion in the cities, which is a great



town planning problem. The selection of suitable sites for industries and for the settlement of communities in garden cities or in any other manner throughout a region is a question for the regional planner.

The Central Electricity Board, which was formed under the Electricity Supply Act, 1926, has powers which should result in the foregoing changes being gradually realised.

This Act is a distinct advance in national and regional planning, and its result should be of great assistance to development planners in their schemes."(18)

McLean may have recognised the possibilities but his evaluation of the likely changes and the role of town planning seem to be founded more on wishful thinking than a sound appreciation of likely outcomes.

By the end of the period of this study three issues were becoming more and more debated within the town planning profession; the distribution of population and the location of industry; preserving the amenities of the countryside; and national planning. Electricity supply could be seen as relevant to all three topics and when O.A. Sherrard, deputy secretary to the Central Electricity Board addressed the Town Planning Institute on the subject, in February, 1934, all three were discussed. The main point of interest in Sherrard's talk was that it demonstrated the logical path of the state undertaking more and more management of the economy. For Sherrard, as a key civil servant, indicated how far planning notions had spread within government bureaucracies by drawing an analogy between towns and electricity that in his view gave rise to planning both.

"The confusion in the electrical industry is paralleled by the

confusion in the development of towns which it is your object to remedy. Electricity like towns, had just grown without taking thought for the morrow." (19)

Sherrard called for the closest degree of co-operation between town planners and the C.E.B., claiming that the Grid could and did create whole new urban developments, instancing Corby as his prime example. Assuming that town planning had the power to control the distribution of towns and cities, Sherrard called upon the planners to decide whether to opt for concentrating industry near existing centres or to go for dispersal in the countryside. The implicit message was that electricity would settle the outcome.

"It is not much exaggeration to say that the backbone and the framework of any planning you do should be the Grid." (20)

This was not generally accepted by the town planners assembled. Longstreth Thompson, a former President of the Town Planning Institute, thought that the suggestion that the framework of planning should be the Grid was like putting the cart before the horse.

"It was the planner's function, in consultation with all interests, to decide which were the areas that it was profitable to develop and those responsible for organising the supply of electricity should fit their service into the plan which had to take account of many other and more static factors than electricity supply." (21)

This was a powerful assertion of the primary, professional role of planners. Abercrombie anticipated some of the later debates by acknowledging that the Grid was a piece of national planning that had not been sufficiently linked up with the general planning of the whole

country.(22) The theme of extending notions of planning from the local to the regional and then to the national scene was a growing opinion unconsciously fostered by state interventions into things like electricity supply. Broader questions of the movement of population from the north to the south and the role of electricity in facilitating such changing distributions eventually led to the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Industrial Population being set up in 1938.(23)

Sherrard wisely tried to keep clear of the problem of building electricity pylons through the countryside. Yet it had aroused fierce controversy. Clough Williams-Ellis, for example led a typical charge in his book, 'England and the Octopus' (1928).

"transmission lines....traverse the loveliest little valleys of Merioneth, destroying their scale and importing a sense of sophistication and 'Progress' of which they were till now so soothingly innocent.

Clearly the electrification of England will not be accomplished without severe shocks to amenity, unless we proceed better than we have begun." (24)

In the discussion on Sherrard's paper W.R. Davidge echoed Williams-Ellis' worries, asserting that the Grid seemed to have chosen every beauty spot to go over.(25) Linkages between problems and issues were being made but, as was becoming increasingly apparent, remedies were lacking.

## (ii) Motor Transport

This section considers the role of the state in the motor transport industry and the relationship that this had to town planning. The main



concern will be to explore the state's response to growing traffic on the roads.

The growth of the motor industry during the inter-war years was particularly marked. Before the war the industry was fractured and small. In 1913, 34,000 motor vehicles of all kinds were built. The war saw an increase in the use of the motor vehicle for all purposes, including the conduct of war itself. After the war production rapidly increased so that by 1924 there were 146,000 vehicles being built.<sup>(26)</sup> The mass assembly techniques of American car firms such as Ford, began to be copied and price reductions followed. The industry became more concentrated in fewer companies and fewer places. Morris and Austin dominated in this country with the introduction of small, cheap cars. Austin began the process in 1921 with the production of the Austin Seven. Morris followed with his version of a popular car, as did Ford of America, who had established plants in Britain. The location of the new industry was centred on the Midlands in Coventry, Birmingham, Luton, Oxford and the London area. Part of the reason for such locations lay in the history of diverse engineering skills in these areas.

The ramifications of the growth of the motor trade were many. In terms of employment the significance of the industry grew by leaps and bounds, so that by the end of the 1930s almost 400,000 were employed.<sup>(27)</sup> As the price fell the market widened to include an ever larger section of the public. Those who could afford a motor car had originally only been the well-to-do. In the inter-war years sections of the middle class were also able to indulge in 'motoring'. In 1922 the number of private cars was equivalent to 1 car per 136 people in Great Britain. By 1927 this had been increased to 1 in 57.<sup>(28)</sup> There was as a consequence a big rise in traffic and in the use of roads.

Between 1922 and 1930 the whole modal split of transport altered in this country. In 1922 horse-drawn vehicles still out-numbered commercial goods vehicles by 232,865 to 150,995. By 1930 the position had been substantially reversed and there were only 52,414 horse-drawn vehicles as against 334,237 commercial goods vehicles. In total, including private cars and motor cycles, the total number of motor vehicles in Great Britain rose from just under 1 million in 1922 to 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> million in 1930.<sup>(29)</sup> As a result traffic congestion in the major towns and particularly in London gave just cause for concern. New methods of traffic control and management had to be devised.

The impact of the motor vehicle was felt everywhere. Country areas were drawn into the urban framework by the advent of the local bus, and town dwellers frequented the countryside by car and charabanc. The country roads were, however, built for different traffic and often deteriorated. The local authority responsibility for road upkeep increased and with it the power and prestige of the Borough Engineer. Many new road schemes, by-passes and the like, were undertaken in the twenties. From 1929 onwards counties and county boroughs became responsible for all roads including trunk roads.<sup>(30)</sup>

### Managing Motor Traffic

The most direct and continuous form of state intervention into the transport industry in this country in the inter-war years was the assistance given to road building. In effect this provided a subsidy to industry, aiding the use of motor traffic and helping the car and truck industries to be among the largest and fastest growing in the country. But such aid was never enough and the problems of congestion in the towns and cities and of inadequate roads in rural areas dominated many debates.

Historically local government had been the main provider and maintainer of roads and this was to continue.<sup>(31)</sup> The main change was that increasingly central government provided major grants to the local authorities and also took a more direct role. The 1909 Roads Act had established a Road Board that was empowered to administer a Development and Road Improvement Fund. The Board was able to provide Highways Authorities with grants and to construct and maintain new roads itself. The Fund was derived from motor spirit and carriage licence duties. During the First World War the Fund was absorbed into the general revenue account and so road improvements were effectively halted.<sup>(32)</sup> In 1919 the Ministry of Transport was established and the duties of the Road Board transferred to it. In 1919-20 a special fund was set aside for arterial road development in the Metropolitan area of London and actively proceeded with.<sup>(33)</sup> The income of the Road Fund was greatly augmented by the introduction of a Vehicle Tax in 1920. A system of road classification was also introduced and the Ministry of Transport made grants to highways authorities on the basis of 50% for Class I roads and 25% for Class II. The state also provided grants of 50% to the salaries of qualified highway engineers employed by local authorities.<sup>(34)</sup>

After the severe rise in unemployment in 1921 the Ministry also began to use the Road Fund to give grants towards roads schemes expedited for the relief of unemployment. By 1926 grants of £35 million had been offered under this arrangement. This figure included the sum being spent directly by the Ministry on building new arterial roads in the London area.<sup>(35)</sup>

The growth of the motor car and the role of the state in providing new roads and administering more traffic control was not a smooth issue and caused considerable impact on government policy and much controversy.



The issue of how to pay for roads rumbled on throughout the twenties. When, after 1926, the Exchequer raided the Road Fund for revenue this aroused considerable opposition both within Whitehall and among Motorists' organisations.<sup>(36)</sup> Nevertheless, the Fund was raided again for the 1928 Budget and in addition a new tax raised on petrol.

The Royal Commission on Transport was established in 1929 and chaired by Sir Arthur Griffith Boscawen. It was concerned to consider both private and public transport. Its report in 1930 led directly to a new Act, The Road Traffic Act, 1930. But this failed to deal effectively with any of the major problems of private cars or public transport. It is principally remembered for abolishing the 20m.p.h. speed limit.<sup>(37)</sup>

### Road Planning & Town Planning

In the aftermath of the First World War the Government, through the Ministry of Health, put two glosses on the overt purpose of town planning; to aid industrial expansion and provide a strategic framework for new communications. These were in addition to the main, and continuing, purpose of controlling suburban development.

After the failure of the post-war boom in 1921 and the consequent loss of justification of town planning to provide a framework for industrial expansion, the main strategic purpose of town planning schemes came to be seen in terms of road planning. This is apparent from reading both general town planning literature, the Ministry of Health reports and looking at the content of Regional Advisory schemes and statutory schemes. Partly this was due to the fact that the state was investing in roads and therefore, it was one of the few aspects of development that a plan could address. It was also due to the fact that after 1921 local authorities were keen to develop emergency schemes to employ local unemployed under the Unemployment Grants Scheme. Many such

schemes were road schemes because they were labour intensive. But it gave a special emphasis and urgency to developing schemes which set out the proposed road network. It must be said, however, that this impetus for town planning was primarily social and is dealt with in the next chapter in the context of a response to unemployment. In addition many of the lead officers on local Town Planning Schemes were Borough Engineers whose primary responsibility was to build roads. But despite considerable investment in new roads and improvements and widenings, congestion, particularly in the heart of towns and cities, remained a constant problem. The growth of motor traffic outpaced efforts to bring the road system up-to-date.

The first post-war Circular on Town Planning, issued by the Ministry of Health in 1921, and reproduced in Appendix 1, emphasised the expected priority to be given to planning roads,

"Local authorities should, at the outset, at least make their town planning schemes as simple as possible, concentrating on the two essentials - settling the principal lines of communication, and allocating areas for the purposes for which they are best suited (zoning), whether industrial, business, residential or as open spaces; this procedure will make for economy and for efficiency." (38)

This priority was echoed in subsequent Model Clauses for Town Planning Schemes issued by the Ministry of Health. (39)

The Ministry of Health also stressed the role of Joint Town Planning Committees in planning arterial roads and, as they were sometimes called, "regional roads". (40)

In practice, however, it became clear that implementing road proposals was far more difficult than planning for them. This was partly due to the exclusion of County Councils from full participation in statutory town planning. The counties had long held very clear powers and duties for road improvement and new road development in all areas except County Boroughs and their exclusion from involvement and ratification of Town Planning Schemes could cause problems. This aspect of town planning is looked at in the specific context of the North Tees Town Planning Scheme in Part 5 of this study.

By 1925 the problem of county exclusion from statutory town planning led the Ministry of Health to issue a Circular to draw the attention of County Councils to the assistance they could give in town planning. This had also been the theme of an address by the Minister, Neville Chamberlain to the County Councils' Association at their annual meeting. The Circular made it clear that the planning of roads was the main concern.

"One of the principal objects of town planning is to make provision for new roads and the widening of existing roads, together with any building or improvement lines, in order to meet the requirements of future traffic, and to reserve the necessary land for this purpose before development or redevelopment takes place, while there is still time to do so with economy.

To enable this to be done satisfactorily and effectively in the case of projected main roads or main road improvements, it is essential, not only that the County Councils should be consulted but that they should take an active part in determining the proposals to be included for these purposes in any town planning schemes within the county." (41)



But the problem could not be solved simply by issuing Circulars and it was apparent that new legislation was required. The opportunity was taken in the Local Government Act, 1929 to make County Councils Planning Authorities and thus ensure that main roads planning could be properly integrated with Town Planning Schemes.

The integration of transport and planning, however, remained fraught. The fact that two separate Ministries, Transport and Health, were responsible certainly didn't help. This was particularly a problem in planning the Trunk Road system, which was the responsibility of the Ministry of Transport. The failure of the Royal Commission on Transport to advocate a system of motorways did not aid a situation which clearly called for far-reaching expenditure and proposals.<sup>(42)</sup>

Expenditure on roads was substantial. In 1925-26, for instance, local authorities (with grant aid from central government) spent £48.8 million on Highways, second only to Education as the highest category of expenditure, and representing nearly 10% of all local expenditure.<sup>(43)</sup> But, as evidence to the 1930 Royal Commission on Traffic revealed, massive traffic congestion, especially in the larger towns, remained a severe problem.<sup>(44)</sup> In addition the vast majority of country roads remained suitable only for horse-drawn vehicles and pedestrians.

The town planning profession tended to be somewhat complacent about the problems. Typical of many statements made on the subject was that of T. Alwyn Lloyd, President of the Town Planning Institute in 1933,

"The achievements of modern town planning in the matter of communications are too well known to require emphasis: of all our post-war planning improvements those represented by new

thoroughfares and widenings of old roads throughout the country are probably the most striking." (45)

### Town Planning & The Economic Imperative

The main purpose of this chapter has been to illustrate how aspects of increased government intervention in the affairs of the state - a process that can be seen to be part of a wider adoption of planning - arose from economic considerations and pressures. The examples taken, electric power supply and motor transport can be seen, like town planning to relate to the development process. Whilst governments quickly shed, after the First World War, any involvement in direct economic activity, they did eventually extend their role in controlling and aiding aspects of the economy which prompted development. Both electric power and modern transport were key undertakings in this respect and can be seen to have a direct connection and relevance to town planning. Having taken powers to regulate and control land-use in important areas of Britain it was logical to try and oversee aspects of economic life which unless checked could lead to chaotic pressures on that land.

This theme of the need to regulate and control important aspects of the development process, whilst still retaining a market economy, is vital to a proper understanding of the way statutory town planning evolved in this country. The major thrust of town planning regulations and method was essentially a guiding mechanism that had no positive power to institute development itself. The Town Planning Scheme and development control emphasise this approach. Even the broader aims to protect amenity fall within this framework, so that the protection of historic sites, areas of beauty, ancient monuments, advertisement control, control of petrol filling stations and the gradually extending

paraphernalia of development control can be seen as designed to prevent certain unwanted things happening. Only at brief times, mainly during and just after the Second World War, has British Town Planning managed to take on a more positive approach to development and redevelopment.

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## Chapter 10 - The Pressure for Planning - The Social Case

This chapter seeks to examine the way governments between 1919 and 1933 reacted to pressure for more planning from a social perspective. The previous chapter has seen how an important strand of intervention and management by government was motivated by the need to control growth and development in the economy and the particular relationship such an imperative had for town planning. But the case for town planning had always been placed in a wider context than just control for the sake of economic efficiency. The argument for intervention to improve standards and the well-being of people had long been advocated. For politicians less moved by arguments for social justice the need to prevent social unrest and maintain stability could be used instead.

This chapter takes two main areas of social and political concern, housing and unemployment, and examines how far such concern led to more intervention by government and hence an extension, in broad terms, of state planning. The case for interventionist policies in housing was a powerful one that had been put forward for some considerable time. The unemployment question was more recent. During the 1920s the case for greater state help in combatting unemployment and improving the welfare of the unemployed was heard with growing strength. The emergence of an imbalance between Britain's Regions in terms of unemployment, poverty and ill-health reinforced calls for action in terms of the need for a regional policy. These fields of housing and unemployment had importance for town planning both directly in terms of the practice and indirectly through an illustration of government approaches to planning in general. The two topics are discussed below in separate sections.

### (1) Housing

The building industry, largely based on house building, grew at almost



double the average rate for the economy during the inter-war period. Much of its fastest growth occurred after 1932 when a private-led housing boom took place. But prior to that the building industry had experienced growth against the trend.<sup>(1)</sup> This was due in no small measure to the part played by the state. Between 1920 and 1930 about 1.5 million houses were built in England and Wales, two-thirds of them with state assistance.<sup>(2)</sup>

The housing problem had been to the forefront of the political agenda for some considerable time. Successive Governments from the late nineteenth century onwards had gradually introduced more and more housing legislation.<sup>(3)</sup> However, it was largely permissive and whilst one or two important principles of state intervention had been recognised, by the time of the First World War housing was still seen, like other commodities, to be largely a matter for a free market economy and the state's role was minimal.

### War Time Intervention

By the time of the First World War Britain was already in the grip of a major housing problem characterised by too many slums, too few new houses being built and those that were being built being too expensive for the poorer classes. The halt in house building during the war made a grave situation worse. Overcrowding and rents increased. The problem of overcrowding could only be solved by a massive building programme, a fact that was recognised early in the war but unattainable due to manpower shortages and the need to use resources for the war effort. However, the state was forced to intervene in the setting of rents. The Rent and Mortgage Restriction Act, 1915 was passed, as already mentioned, as a direct result of social unrest, particularly in Scotland. Landlords were able to extract extortionate rents in a market restricted through war.

The need to ensure that vital elements of the war economy were not held up for lack of housing led to important new state initiatives in house building. This new intervention of the Government, mainly to build or ensure the building of houses for munitions workers, was an important new role for the state but its influence should not be overstated. In all some 10,000 dwellings were built in such schemes on 38 estates, starting in 1915 at Woolwich.<sup>(4)</sup> Many of the schemes were in fact company schemes supported by Government subsidy. An example in the Teesside area was Dormanstown built by Dorman Long Steel Company and designed by Adshead, Abercrombie and Ramsey.<sup>(5)</sup> The layout of many of these estates provided good examples of open design and were built to high standards. The influence of these wartime developments lay in the spreading of good practice in design and layout and in further legitimising the role of state intervention in an area hitherto largely led by private enterprise. The principle of direct building of houses by Government departments was not a policy option that was given any further consideration once the war ended but the principle of providing subsidies to boost building received wide agreement during the war.

Preparing for peace had begun in 1916 when the Reconstruction Committees were first set up. The housing subsidy idea was adopted by the Advisory Panel of Housing in 1917. The Panel, chaired by Lord Salisbury, recommended a target of 300,000 houses to be met by the post-war Government.<sup>(6)</sup> Later targets were to be amended upwards as the true extent of the housing shortage came to be appreciated. The actual shortage in 1918 has been calculated to be closer to 600,000.<sup>(7)</sup> The eventual target adopted in 1919 after the compulsory Housing Surveys of Local Authorities were completed was 500,000.<sup>(8)</sup>

### Housing Standards

Another part of the Reconstruction apparatus that had particular



influence on the post-war housing scene was the Tudor Walters Committee.<sup>(9)</sup> Known in Whitehall as the 'Committee of Experts' it was charged with reporting on the technical and practical issues of building small houses. However, it also reported on policy matters thus strengthening the hand of those who favoured a strong state-led approach. On design matters the report was especially influential and advocated standards that were to be a benchmark for popular housing, similar to the part played by the Parker Morris report of the 1960s.<sup>(10)</sup> The Tudor Walters Committee was particularly influenced by Raymond Unwin. Unwin had considerable experience in house design, estate layout and town planning. His book, 'Town Planning in Practice', 1909, <sup>(11)</sup> was a standard text and he was known for his work at New Earswick, Hampstead Garden Suburb and Letchworth. His special contribution was to espouse the need for low density development and his short work 'Nothing Gained by Overcrowding' (1912) can be seen to have been of special influence in the Tudor Walters' report.<sup>(12)</sup>

#### Post-War Housing Policies, 1919-21

Successive post-war housing policies reflected the economic situation and the differing political priorities of the Labour and Conservative Parties. But, the whole housing debate was shifted to a new plane. Radical differences between the main political parties remained but these differences were conducted around an agreement that state intervention was acceptable and necessary. There was to be no return to the pre-war situation.

Initial post-war housing policy reflected the popular desire for far-reaching measures and took up the various recommendations of war time committees and the hopes of the Reconstruction Ministry led by Addison. In the 1918 General Election, Lloyd George gave his famous pledge of constructing 'Homes fit for Heroes'.



As Swenarton, 1981,(13) and Burnett, 1982, (14) have noted, the 'Homes fit for Heroes' programme was far from successful. The Housing Act of 1919 and the accompanying organisational and financial changes introduced by Addison, marked a vast change in direction from pre-war practice and fulfilled most of the recommendations made by experts in the Reconstruction Committees of the war. But several factors conspired to ensure that the policy area was both flawed and short lived. It was to be flawed because it exacerbated the trend to rising prices that played a part in the financial crisis that reached its high point in 1921. Shortages of materials and labour meant that delivering Addison houses was much harder than planning them. Building costs rose twice as fast as other costs in the brief period of the 1919 Acts.(15) The cost of an average new house rose from £250 in 1914 to £1,250 in 1920. The average cost of all Addison houses was £1,000.(16) The Acts, by offering generous subsidies to both the public and private sector encouraged price rises. Unless controls were extended the Acts were bound to be out of balance with the rest of the economy. The Conservative Government that followed the fall of the Coalition Government of Lloyd George in 1922 sought to lessen the role of the state in housing. But the financial crisis of 1921 and the general boom conditions of 1919-1921 cannot be simply laid at the door of Addison's housing policy. It was unfortunate that the radical housing policies should be overtaken by events that were occurring world-wide and that the power of the monetarists in Parliament and the Treasury should have been able to re-assert their authority after only a few brief years.

#### An Assessment of the Addison Years

Nevertheless, in the two years of the Acts a number of important innovations were laid down. Housing for the first time became a

mandatory activity for local authorities. They were obliged to carry out Housing Surveys in their areas to ascertain the need for working class housing and then to make and carry out plans for their provision, with the approval of the Ministry of Health. Provided that the Ministry did accept such schemes then the Government would bear all the costs in excess of the product of a penny rate. In effect, the Government was providing state housing and the local authority was its agent. The Government also established important control over the design and layout of such houses. Ministry approval was required seven times in the course of moving from planning to completion. The Tudor Walters' report provided the general backdrop which was followed up with the Ministry's, 'Housing Manual', 1919, (17) and later, 'Housing Types and Elevations', 1920, (18) which also helped to shape the appearance and standard of post-war council housing. In fact, housing standards were much improved, if stereotyped, in this period. The size of house, its internal arrangements and the amenities were all of a new, higher order. In fact the Addison houses were among the best in this respect of all post-war council houses. The main Act also ensured a maintenance of rent control. Councils were responsible for the fixing of rents but the Ministry had to approve them. Up to March 1927, they were to be based on the controlled rents of pre-war housing.

As well as creating a new Ministry of Health in 1919, to oversee the new housing programme (among other matters), seven new Regional Housing Commissioners were set up to co-ordinate and expedite local activity. These commissioners were abolished along with the Addison subsidies in the crisis of 1921.

A further Addison Act, the Housing (Additional Powers) Act, 1919 was designed to stimulate private builders into greater activity. The Act



provided for a lump sum subsidy of between £150 and £160 per house to any builder who built a house not exceeding a certain size either for sale or rent.(19) In addition it gave local authorities the power to stop private buildings in their area when this interfered with the supply of labour or materials available for public housing schemes.

In the short period of the Addison Acts, 1919-1921, 214,000 houses were sanctioned, approximately half the number officially deemed as needed, and well short of the actual need which by 1921 has been estimated as 805,000.(20) In terms of what was actually built between 1920 and 1922 the local authorities built 104,000 houses and all forms of private enterprise, with or without subsidy, 68,000.(21)

### Housing Policy 1923-1933

The housing legislation that followed the Addison Acts fell into a pattern that was to be repeated after the Second World War. Successive Conservative and Labour governments gave different emphasis to public and private housing but within a common acceptance that there would be a continuation of both sectors receiving state support. After the collapse of the Addison Acts the next major housing statute was the Chamberlain Act of 1923. This Act sought to stimulate private house building rather than local authority building. A subsidy of £6 per house was available to either private builders or local authorities for 20 years for houses of a certain size that could be either sold or let. The snag for the local authority was that it had to show that private enterprise was unable to provide the houses that the authority sought permission to build.(22)

The reversal of Addison's policy by giving the main support to private housing can be seen in the results of Chamberlain's Act. Between 1923 and 1929, 438,000 houses were built under the Act, 363,000 by private



enterprise and only 75,000 by local authorities.(23) Subsidies undoubtedly helped to stimulate the private sector but of equal significance were the fall in building costs enabling the average price of a three-bedroomed house to fall from £920 in 1920 to £397 in 1927 and easier access to mortgages.(24)

The Wheatley Act a year later swung the balance back in favour of the local authorities who were offered a subsidy of £9 per house (£12.10s.0 in rural areas) provided that they met the same standards as in the Chamberlain Act, but only if they built for rent. In addition, the local authority could add a further rate borne subsidy to keep rents down. This Act remained in operation until 1933 although a reduced subsidy operated from 1926. The Wheatley Act was highly successful. In its 9 years of operation, 1924-1933, it produced 508,000 houses, all but 15,000 provided by local authorities.(25)

The 1925 Housing Act was a consolidating Act which codified all existing housing legislation. The elements of Chamberlain's and Wheatley's subsidies were retained and houses continued to be built with these subsidies throughout the period under consideration.

There was no fresh legislation on housing until 1930 when the accent turned to the problem of the slums. The Housing Act, 1930, was completed by the second Labour Government but was never implemented owing to the financial crisis of 1931. It was left to the National Government to pass a new Housing Act in 1933 which substantially recreated Greenwood's 1930 Act. Greenwood had introduced for the first time, an Exchequer grant to local authorities specifically for slum clearance. A subsidy was payable at a rate of £2.10s.0d. per person displaced and rehoused, for 40 years. An additional sum was payable when the cost of acquiring sites and rehousing in flats was the only

option. Local authorities were obliged under the Act to submit programmes based on clearing the slums in five years.<sup>(26)</sup> The 1933 Act of Sir E. Hilton Young adopted most of Greenwood's proposals but failed to remedy the original fault of not laying down definitions of what constituted a slum. The 1933 Act also ended the Wheatley subsidy.

The effects of this Act were not felt during the study period. The first programmes agreed by the Ministry only identified 250,000 unfit dwellings, although experts tended to put the figure closer to 1 million. By 1939, 245,000 unfit dwellings had been cleared or closed and 255,000 new houses or flats built as replacement, together with another 24,000 built to relieve overcrowding.<sup>(27)</sup> It was the first concerted attack on the slum problem.

#### The Effects of Housing Intervention

In overall terms some very important changes were wrought on the housing scene between 1919 and 1933. Not only was there a very significant growth rate in new house building and, therefore, a growth of towns and cities, but new tenure patterns were forming. The local authority rented sector, which occupied only a minor place in pre-war days, became an every larger phenomenon, mainly at the expense of the privately rented sector. In 1914 only 1% of families in Great Britain rented council houses. By 1939 they constituted 14%.<sup>(28)</sup> The other main occurrence was the march of owner occupation aided by the easier availability of mortgages through building societies. This was brought about by a fall in interest rates and a more favourable taxation position for Building Societies enabling them to offer investors better terms.<sup>(29)</sup> Owner occupation rose from 10% of families in Great Britain in 1914 to 31% by 1939.<sup>(30)</sup>



For those who secured a new house in this period there was generally much improvement. The new houses were built to a far higher standard than mass housing previously and were by this token healthier. The amenities in the house reduced the daily drudgery experienced by so many, mainly women, in the old Victorian dwellings. The example of such new housing probably contributed to a growing dissatisfaction with older housing and demands for increased rates of council building and slum clearance.

There were side effects however. The march of houses across previous green fields helped to produce a powerful conservation movement, opposed to sprawl and ribbon development.<sup>(31)</sup> The new estates also had a dull uniformity about them. Council houses may have lacked the outrageous examples of jerry building suffered by some private house buyers but the standardisation imposed by the Ministry meant that council houses tended to look alike whether in Surbiton or Middlesbrough.<sup>(32)</sup>

It is debateable too, if the new estates produced a better social life. The price of more space, easier hygiene and access to electricity and gadgets was a more isolated life dominated by the radio rather than the pub, club or Music Hall. Street life diminished as families became more inward looking.<sup>(33)</sup> Standards of living for tenants were sometimes more impoverished on the new estates. A study of the new council estate of Becontree, Dagenham showed that a number of tenants returned to the inner cities after a short while unable to pay the higher rents, the increased travel to work costs and the higher food costs of the suburbs. Many of those that remained soon got into arrears.<sup>(34)</sup> In fact, this highlights another major defect of housing provision in this period in that it did not address the problems of the poorer workers in society. The new private houses were generally sold



to the white collar, middle class who could afford a deposit and subsequent mortgage payments. The new local authority council housing rents were usually much higher than those for older inner area houses and this effectively closed the council estates to the low paid who were generally unskilled or semi-skilled. When low-paid workers were re-housed on new estates their health often deteriorated due to a fall in standards of diet brought about by the need to divert income from food to rent. This was brought out in M'Gonigle and Kirby's study in Stockton.(35)

The huge building programmes of the inter-war years, numbering 1.5 million houses in the 1920s and 2.8 million in the 1930s, demonstrates, as Stevenson points out, the great latent wealth that still existed in Britain.(36) But it is also a testament to the scale of housing need that had accumulated by 1918. Despite all the investment into housing in the inter-war years, by 1933 there still remained a major housing problem. Slum clearance in the 1920s and early 1930s was minimal and made little impact on the miles of by-law housing and older courts of Victorian Britain present in every town and city. Housing shortages continued throughout the study period despite significant housebuilding. Household formation more than kept pace with new housebuilding so that the 800,000 new houses needed in 1921 was the number still required in 1933.

Housing was one clear policy area where successive Governments after the First World War adopted a managed and interventionist stance largely on social grounds. The motive cannot be seen as primarily economic, although there undoubtedly were good economic reasons to boost an important leading sector of the national economy. Rather, the key impulse would appear to be a desire to meet strong social and political pressures demanding adequate and improved housing conditions.

On the widest plane state intervention in housing showed the growing involvement of government with providing elements of social welfare previously seen as outside their scope. Such involvement helped to fuel a developing ideology of state management and collectivism. The growth of housing development also gave an added impetus to the need for some improved measure of land-use control through town planning. The power of local authorities grew as a result of local authority housing duties and this in turn provided a more powerful framework for local town planning.

### Housing & Town Planning

The link between Town Planning and Housing had long been, conceptually and practically, very close and this was reflected in the first Town Planning Acts. The housing reform movements of the nineteenth century were among the first to recognise the necessity for a wider approach to the built environment than just the dwelling. The size and internal arrangements of a house, even the better layout of terraces and streets were seen to be of little success without attention to adequate surroundings, a separation from polluting industry and proper access to open space - all features which a town plan could address. For architect-planners like R. Unwin there was another key ingredient to better living - the art of civic design.

"We have forgotten that endless rows of brick boxes, looking out upon dreary streets and squalid backyards, are not really homes for people, and can never become such, however complete may be the drainage system, however pure the water supply, or however detailed the bye-laws under which they are built. Important as all these provisions for man's material needs and sanitary existence are, they do not suffice. There is needed the

vivifying touch of art which would give completeness and increase their value tenfold; there is needed just that imaginative treatment which could transform the whole." (37)

The holistic approach of some town planners led to the search for far-reaching solutions, among them the Garden City notion. The advocates of garden cities, led by the originator, Ebenezer Howard, stressed that the housing issue and its linked social problems could only be solved by establishing new settlements.(38) Simply building on to existing towns did nothing to address either the problems of overcrowding, slums and sprawl or rural isolation and deprivation. The establishment of Letchworth Garden City from 1903 was heralded by its supporters as proof that the ideal could work.(39)

After the First World War there was a renewed attempt to influence opinion in favour of establishing new garden cities. Believing the climate of 1918 to be potentially more receptive, F. Osborn published a small book entitled, New Towns After the War, following consultation with E. Howard, C.B. Purdom and W.G. Taylor.(40) There was sufficient response to the book to start a New Towns Group, which espoused the need for 100 new towns. Despite widespread lobbying of Whitehall, political parties and Municipal Associations there was very little to show for such efforts. The 1923 Housing Act did provide local authorities with powers to buy land to help establish garden cities but failed to provide either a national lead or financial assistance. E. Howard's initiative in starting a second garden city at Welwyn in 1920 helped to keep the idea alive but also absorbed much of the energy of Osborn, Purdom and others, resulting in a relaxation of general propaganda for state intervention.(41)

Local authorities and some private companies did, however mistakenly,



seek to bring garden city ideas into their own housing developments. Throughout the 1920s local authorities up and down the country called their council housing estates, garden suburbs, to indicate the new low density and open layout being adopted. In reality such garden suburbs, although providing some improvement in standards were the antithesis of Howard's principles and simply added to a growing urban sprawl. They also helped to confuse the true garden city ideal. One major local authority development, which was started in 1928 did however, try to be more ambitious in its approach. The authority was Manchester and the development was a plan for a new self-contained suburb, called Wythenshawe. The plans were drawn up by Barry Parker, but the inspiration was that of E.D. Simon, the political leader of Manchester City Council, who had made the housing problem his special concern. Wythenshawe was planned as a separate settlement with its own green belt, an industrial base as well as low density residential areas. Parker was also keen to introduce the idea of parkways which were substantial new roads set in landscaped strips.(42)

The priority accorded to housing in statutory town planning schemes was always clear. George Pepler in his presidential year of the Town Planning Institute, 1919, pointed out to a town planning conference at Oxford that, "To make good homes possible is the central aim of the Town Planner." (43) Town planning schemes superseded many of the previous by-law regulations which governed the building and layout of houses. The Model Clauses, issued by the Ministry of Health for town planning schemes, contained many clauses dealing with the issues of housing density, building lines, the height of buildings and proximity between buildings. Towards the end of the 1920s there was also a growing attempt to control the appearance of dwellings through regulations on elevations and the use of materials. Town planning was, therefore, closely involved not only in the wider concepts of living

but in the detail of the way housing was developed on the ground. The housing agenda after the war was dominated by the need for more homes built to higher standards. Town planning legislation was so framed that it could assist the solution to this pressing problem. Other housing issues such as slum clearance and the redevelopment of the existing town fabric took second place. The town planning profession recognised the need for legislation and government policy to embrace both aspects of the housing problem and stressed the need for town planning to cover all town areas but it was not something that was vigorously pursued. It wasn't until the end of the 1920s that public attention began to be drawn to the 'slum problem'. Although lacking central organisation a widespread campaign to 'awaken politicians and the public to the appalling conditions of Britain's slums had a rapid effect. Special newspaper reports, broadcast talks and appeals by clergy and even the Prince of Wales, placed the slum issue firmly on the agenda.<sup>(44)</sup> At a Special Committee of the National Housing and Town Planning Council in 1928, it was shown that the slum problem had not improved since 1918, and that there were at least one million unfit and two million overcrowded houses.<sup>(45)</sup> The Labour Party pledged to do something and laid the foundations of modern slum clearance by passing a Housing Act in 1930.

Housing then, was one crucial area that demonstrated the susceptibility of national governments to respond to social needs if there was a sufficient political campaign. There were, however, powerful political advantages to be gained in ensuring that housing conditions were improved, not least the fact that the chances of social revolution were lessened. Such calculations did not necessarily extend to other areas of social and political concern as will be shown in the context of unemployment.



(ii) Unemployment & Regional Policy

After housing, unemployment was the most significant area of national social concern. As the numbers of long-term unemployed rose in the 1920s so it supplanted housing as the number one political issue.

But, unlike housing, it failed to move Governments to adopt powerful measures of intervention. Despite the public attention given to unemployment through social survey information, popular journalism and novels, as discussed in Chapter 8, both Labour and Conservative Governments proved remarkably resistant to adopting special policy initiatives to stimulate the economy or provide job creating schemes.

The main reason that can be advanced for this is that whereas a state role in housing was still possible within a broad framework of economic laissez-faire and monetarism a dynamic policy of public works and economic intervention to create jobs would run directly counter to such philosophy. Just as the Government was prepared to intervene in the industrial development process, but not industry itself, so it was prepared to expand welfare to include housing and wider unemployment benefits but not to expand the economy itself. These limits reflect on all aspects of social and economic intervention in the inter-war years, including town planning.

Government policy on unemployment was essentially welfare based and it entered into far reaching commitments after the First World War. Such commitments had considerable impact on the finance plans of successive governments and played a crucial role in the downfall of the 1929-31 Labour Government. As in housing, successive Conservative administrations tried to lessen state expenditure, while Labour administration sought to expand state efforts to meet social needs.



This section will briefly outline the unemployment problem and how this was manifest increasingly in sharp regional differences. It will then move on to consider government policy on unemployment in terms of welfare benefits and public relief works, as well as the start of regional policy. Finally the extent to which town planning inter-acted with the unemployment issue will be considered.

### The Unemployment Problem

The causes of unemployment are complex but can be broadly categorised into two main factors: structural and cyclical. This was not clearly understood in the early 1920s. The cyclical nature of unemployment was appreciated. It had been a feature of capitalism since its very beginning. Although not fully comprehended cyclical unemployment was seen to be the result of swings in trade between market economies. When the pendulum of trade was in its down swing then industries were forced to lay-off labour until demand picked-up again. This temporary phenomenon might last a few months, perhaps occasionally longer, but was never a permanent feature. This analysis governed the approach of the Government in the 1920/21 economic slump and so set the basis for policy approaches, which later governments had some cause to regret because of the high cost. But the analysis of the cause of unemployment failed to understand that another factor in twentieth century unemployment had emerged that was much more persistent than cyclical factors and was to produce long-term unemployment. The 'over-production' in important staple industries coupled with a lack of competitiveness created a structural unemployment. This phenomenon affected industries such as coal, cotton, iron and steel and shipbuilding and meant that even when general world trade increased unemployment levels remains stubbornly high. When, as in 1929-33 the

cyclical factor re-asserted itself, the result was that unemployment rose to unprecedented levels.(46)

There are problems in producing comparable figures on unemployment during the inter-war years but the following table provides figures which give the best broad picture.

Table 1      Numbers & Percentages of Insured Workers Unemployed  
(UK unless stated)

<u>December</u>	<u>000</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
1920	691	5.8*
1921	2,038	17.9
1922	1,464	12.8
1923	1,229	10.6
1924	1,263	10.7
1925	1,243	10.4
1926	1,432	11.9
1927	1,194	9.8
1928	1,334	11.1
1929	1,344	11.0
1930	2,500	19.9
1931	2,510	20.0*
1932	2,747	22.1*
1933	2,224	18.0*

(Source: Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom No.78, Table 91 augmented with figures from Ministry of Labour, G.B. only, marked\*)

From this table the very sharp shock that the 1920/21 economic slump produced can be seen. The period 1922-29 was one of relative economic upswing but the irreducible element of unemployment always remained above one million. The slump of 1930-33 can also be seen when unemployment never dropped below two million. In addition to these figures it must also be remembered that there were those who were unemployed but were not in the National Insurance Scheme and those who were, but were disqualified from benefits. In 1932 such numbers totalled approximately 470,000.

The extent to which the unemployment problem was a structural phenomenon can be illustrated by showing the rates of unemployment for certain industries.

Table 2                      Perentage Unemployment in Staple Industries

<u>Industry</u>	<u>1929</u>	<u>1932</u>
Coal	18.2	41.2
Cotton	14.5	31.1
Shipbuilding	23.2	59.5
Iron & Steel	19.9	48.5
Average all industries	9.9	22.9

(Source: Stevenson, J. British Society 1914-45, London (1984) Table 19, p:270).

Since these staple industries were concentrated in certain regions a corollary of structural unemployment was a polarisation of unemployment in such regions, as the following table illustrates.

Table 3                      Percentage Unemployed by Region

<u>Region</u>	<u>1923</u>	<u>1930</u>
London	9.0	9.8
Midlands	9.4	18.6
North East	11.7	24.5
North West	12.7	29.3
Scotland	13.5	23.5
Wales	5.6	31.2
Great Britain	11.2	19.9

(Source: Mowat, C.L. Britain Between the Wars, London (1968) p.275)

Even within the depressed regions of Scotland, Wales, the North West and North East there were special blackspots where unemployment embraced the majority of insured workers. Appendix 3 provides some additional information.

### The Government's Response to Unemployment

Lloyd George can be seen to be the chief architect of Britain's welfare provisions so far as unemployment was concerned in the inter-war years.

As Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1911 he introduced the National Insurance Scheme, which was intended to be actuarially based, i.e.

benefits would be balanced by contributions. In return for compulsory



weekly contributions the worker was entitled to benefits if he became unemployed. This has rightly been seen as a major reform despite being limited to only 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> million workers. The Poor Law still remained to provide indoor and outdoor relief to those not covered by the scheme and to other categories of impoverished people.

In 1918 Lloyd George, this time as Prime Minister, oversaw an extension to the scheme which widened the membership to most workers and increased benefits. In 1920 and 1921, with unemployment rapidly rising the scheme was again extended by lengthening the period of contributions after gaps and by providing allowances for dependents. These concessions altered the concept of the Insurance Fund and effectively introduced the 'dole'. At the same time the notion of a 'family allowance' was also created. The ramifications for Government expenditure were enormous. The Fund was soon saddled with massive debts and forced to borrow. The issue of this continuous flow of public expenditure was to cause major political friction over the next two decades and helped bring down the second Labour Government.(47)

The negative effects of government policy in this area of unemployment were due largely to attempts to save money, either by reducing benefits or disqualifying claimants. Benefits were reduced either by straight cuts, or by introducing longer gaps between types of benefit. Invariably Conservative administrations sought to widen gaps and decrease benefits and Labour administrations would try and restore the position. Disqualification was attempted by a variety of ways. In 1921 the claimant had to prove he/she was 'genuinely seeking work'. This was dropped in 1924 and reintroduced again in 1927 and later dropped again in 1930. In 1931 the notorious 'means test' was brought in whereby before a worker could extend his benefits from the 'as of right' 26 weeks he had to submit to a household means test. By 1932

almost one million workers came into the means test scope and large numbers were debarred from benefit and their relief reduced.(48)

For those who either did not qualify, ceased to qualify or were disqualified the next recourse was to apply for relief, up to 1929, from the Poor Law Guardians. The Poor Law Guardians were elected locally and, therefore, their style and level of benefit varied according to their attitudes. The Ministry of Health laid down scales but these were not always adhered to. The burden for meeting the cost of relief fell chiefly on local authorities. Those authorities with the highest unemployment and therefore the greatest burden were usually the poorest areas with a low rate base. They were forced to borrow to meet the costs. Under the Local Authority (Financial Provisions) Act, 1921 the Government were able to control local authorities spending in this area by refusing permission for loans.(49) The numbers receiving outdoor relief under the Poor Laws rose from 224,000 in March, 1921 to 1,065,000 in June, 1922.(50) In 1929 the Poor Law was abolished and the provision of relief was dealt with through the local employment exchanges and the Public Assistance Committees, a forerunner of the Department of Health and Social Security at local level.(51)

The welfare mechanism was the primary Government policy towards the unemployed. Three other areas were explored but never fully developed; public works, encouraging rationalisation and regional policy. They are considered in turn.

### Public Works

The adoption of public works was a policy option that became the favourite proposal of the Liberal Party in the 1920s and was allied to a programme of Keynesian deficit-financing.(52) In practice neither Conservative nor Labour Governments did more than tinker with the idea.

Some small-scale public works schemes had been permissible in the pre-war period through the Unemployed Workmen's Act, 1905 and the establishment of a Development Fund in 1909.(53) In the wake of the sudden upsurge of unemployment in the winter of 1920/21 the Government established an Unemployment Grants Committee which made direct grants available to local authorities to construct roads and bridges, drainage works and afforestation schemes. But the grants were few in number. Local authorities did rather more under their own finances repairing roads, tramways and buildings and undertaking some new construction of schools and other public buildings. But this activity, both central government financed and local authority-led, only contributed to some 8-10,000 extra jobs.(54)

Through the 1920s there were continuing relief schemes for the unemployed in local areas and a constant clamour from the hardest hit local authorities to Whitehall to provide grants for capital works. The Government did respond to a degree by advancing its road programme but there was no overall additional expenditure. Both Labour Governments came under much pressure to adopt a high profile so far as public works were concerned. In 1924 the Labour Chancellor, Phillip Snowden reluctantly agreed to endorse a package of works costing £28 million. His views were clear, for introducing the scheme he said:

"You are never going to settle the unemployed problem, you are never going to mitigate it to any extent, by making work." (55)

The Labour Government fell before any part of the scheme could be implemented. The second Labour Government revived the Unemployment Grants Committee in 1929 and created a new Development Fund aimed at helping finance construction schemes on the railways, in the docks and elsewhere. But the sums were small, to be spread over a number of



years and had little effect on unemployment. The Labour leadership had altered little from 1924 and the same could be said for their views.

### Rationalisation of Industry

Conservative Governments were less inclined than Labour to undertake or encourage public works to help the unemployment problem. But they did begin a policy of aiding the rationalisation of industry which tended to contribute to unemployment. Such a policy was a recognition of the structural problem of unemployment. The aim was to encourage amalgamation of companies within particular industries, closing inefficient units and modernising production methods. In 1929 Baldwin encouraged the Bank of England to help create the Lancashire Cotton Corporation which then set about reducing the size and increasing the efficiency of the cotton industry. The following year the Bank of England was instrumental in forming the Bankers' Industrial Development Corporation which provided the financial backing for the National Shipbuilders Security Limited. This latter organisation then set about closing several shipyards deemed to be inefficient. One result of their work was to close Palmers shipyard in Jarrow which was later to receive a very critical examination in Ellen Wilkinson's book, The Town that was Murdered.<sup>(56)</sup>

### Regional Policy

The last policy area to be considered here is the option of developing a regional response by central government to the depressed areas. The failure to address, what may be termed, the spatial consequences of unemployment lay, in part, in the continued inability to recognise the deep-seated nature of structural unemployment. So long as unemployment was perceived to be due to the failure of international trade to fully revive then the problems of the declining industries was unlikely to be addressed.

During the study period the only strand of policy which had a regional dimension was that of training and transference. In many ways the two areas were closely linked. In 1925/6 the first training schemes were set up in four areas of high unemployment. Their purpose was to train the unemployed in bricklaying, carpentry and agricultural work with a view to enabling the participants to emigrate.<sup>(57)</sup> In 1928 the number of schemes was increased and supplemented by the establishment of Transfer Instructional Centres for young men in mining areas and an Industrial Transference Board was established to provide assistance to young miners to move to other more prosperous areas. By 1929 there were 11 such training centres which were extended and made effectively compulsory by the second Labour Government. Anyone refusing to attend could be denied benefit. These centres were soon dubbed 'slave camps' by critics.<sup>(58)</sup> In 1932 new physical training centres were established for young men to use on a voluntary basis.

The first, more positive, steps to undertake an economic approach to the regions did not occur until 1934. In that year the Government passed the Special (Depressed) Areas Act, 1934, and set up a Distressed Areas Fund of £2 million after a powerful press campaign operated by The Times and a growing sense of unease about the political repercussions of continued high unemployment in certain regions.

It should be borne in mind in this survey of Government response to unemployment that the concern is to highlight the strands of policy and to indicate the ideological stance of governments, rather than assess the impact. It can be asserted, however, that the impact during the study period of these policies was minimal. In many ways the efforts of local authorities and voluntary organisations was just as substantial in terms of job creation and welfare support. Local authorities provided relief works, distributed food and clothing and



gave financial help under the Poor Laws. The voluntary effort, through organisations like the National Council for Social Services, helped establish Occupation Centres, allotments, holidays, educational classes and many handouts of clothes and food.(60)

The way in which unemployment affected town planning is considered in the next section.

### Unemployment & Town Planning

The government policy on unemployment which had the most direct impact on town planning was the provision of public works and relief schemes. In the same way that housing development was used to justify the need for Town Planning Schemes so the provision of development through unemployment schemes did the same. In both cases the regulation and proper siting of such development was given as a justification for planning. In the case of relief schemes there was an additional support for town planning. The pressure to bring forward schemes quickly could often only be met if a Town Planning Scheme, or draft, could indicate the line of a new road or bridge.

In 1921 the unemployment problem, as a new post-war factor attracted a great deal of attention. For the local authorities and the local public the main hope to relieve the situation was to embark upon schemes which could employ substantial numbers. These were often new roads, road widenings, promenades at seaside towns and other environmental improvements. These were all seen as often dependent on the town planning scheme for identification. The Town Planning Institute discussed the matter in 1921 when W.R. Davidge presented a paper, 'Town Planning and Unemployment Emergency Measures'. Davidge's particular sympathy with the unemployed was made clear.



"Under the present want of system, in such crises as the present wide-spread unemployment, the more steady and independent of our workers will suffer silently rather than complain, and their little reserve of funds is drawn on as long as it will last.

Whatever measures are taken must deal with these silent sufferers, and not only with the noisy ones who by demonstrations and processions are constantly in the public eye (when they are not in the public house)." (62)

Davidge then went on to pose a question and gave his opinion of its relevance to town planning.

"What useful work can at once be undertaken which will relieve the immediate situation and at the same time be of the greatest benefit to the community?

There can be no more fitting subject for Town Planners to consider, for a town plan, after all, is but a schedule of proposed works marked out in order of their importance to the community." (63)

Davidge ruled out solutions which might give subsidies to private employers or assist industry in various ways and highlighted public works as the key. He then went on to list a substantial number of possible projects relating to roads, parks, railways, reclamation and so on, pointing out that it was essential to have a plan for the future. The dilemma that a plan must precede any action and yet action was required immediately was unresolved. Rather Davidge concluded by re-stating the case for town planning.

"I would venture to suggest, therefore, that the present time is opportune for this Institute to press upon authorities

everywhere the necessity for preparing general schemes of Town Planning and development well beforehand, so that they may be ready when emergency arises." (63)

Two important points were made in the discussion following the paper. First it was pointed out that the question of the cost of undertaking the range of schemes outlined by Davidge was unrealistic and had not received proper consideration by him.(64) The second was that it would be contrary to the central message of town planning to be pushed into rushing Town Planning Schemes through to serve emergency and pragmatic ends.(65)

The issue of unemployment and town planning was not tackled again so directly by the Town Planning Institute. But it did feature regularly throughout the study period in relationship to public works and especially road schemes. For the local town planner or engineer the unemployment relief scheme remained a constant feature of their work throughout the 1920s and early 1930s.

### (iii) The Social Imperative for Planning

This chapter has sought, through studying two particular examples, housing and unemployment, to show how successive governments in the study period reacted to social pressures to adopt greater measures of planning, seen in terms of state controls and management. In overall terms it would seem that intervention by government on social grounds was less successful and faced far greater resistance than was the case for economic intervention. In the aftermath of the First World War housing was still accorded priority and substantial public investment and control in housing was to remain throughout the study period. But after 1921 there was a retrenchment by government, which was only reversed briefly and temporarily in 1924. In the case of unemployment

a similar but less successful pattern, from the point of view of state intervention, was discernable. In the progressive mood of 1918 to 1920 the welfare provision for the unemployed were extended but after 1921 they came under substantial pressure throughout the rest of the study period. So far as undertaking intervention in the economy to try and stimulate the economy, or provide direct investment to create jobs, successive Governments proved reluctant or adamantly opposed to such a course of action. Only gradually was the deep-seated nature of structural unemployment recognised. The manifestation of such a problem in wide regional disparities of economic health was not even considered until 1934. The prime reason why these inter-war Governments proved reluctant to yield to direct economic intervention, on either economic or social grounds, lay primarily in the continuance of laissez-faire, monetarist economic theories. The ideas of Keynes for deficit-financing and substantial public works were not to be adopted until after the Second World War. Thus the dominant ideological stance of Governments during the study period limited intervention and planning to regulatory mechanisms. In economic terms this meant controlling only the process of development and definitely not stimulating economic activity by direct involvement. In social terms it meant a similar approach of only intervening to control and prevent social unrest and not to eradicate, through major investment, social ills.

For town planning the power of the social and economic imperatives were reflected in the creation of a weak and narrow regulatory tool primarily to promote economic efficiency through ordered land-use and appropriate communications networks. A positive town planning, with powers to create new towns, redevelop worn-out city centres, paralleled by a distribution of national investment reflecting the needs of the



poorer Regions, was never acceded to in any realistic and practical way. But the arguments for a more positive town planning from both social and economic perspectives was placed increasingly on the agenda by both the town planning profession and local government. There were increasing numbers within government, both locally and nationally who were sympathetic to an extension of planning in both general and more specific land-use terms.

Following an examination of the administrative context for planning in the next chapter a consideration is then given to the way the broad notion of planning was discussed in the political arena during the 1920s and early 1930s. There was a very lively debate in fact and it provided a continual background of pressure and ideas for more state intervention in social and economic affairs. On the whole the tide of opinion for more planning was growing in the period and was widely based. In many ways the planning discussions of the inter-war years laid the foundation for the post-war consensus approach of successive Governments.

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## Chapter 11 - The Central & Local Government Framework for Planning

This study is concerned to examine town planning as a governmental activity and so it is important to consider the operation of Government at both central and local levels during the 1920s and early 1930s. The factors to be considered include the general scope of government, its changing structure and duties and the relationship between the two tiers. In addition the tendencies within central and local government for more or less planning will be identified.

### The Relationship between Central and Local Government

The relationship between the two tiers of Government in Britain is complex. Local government possessed very powerful historical roots that derived from the earliest forms of local administration, the Warpentake and Parish.<sup>(1)</sup> Identification with the local political unit provides a bond for people living within communities. The Parish, although not a powerful body between the wars was stronger than today and as a building block for the rest of local government gave a certain cultural and political cohesiveness which belied the financial and administrative changes that were gradually moving power away from the base to the centre.

Constitutionally the power of central government was dominant over local government. Parliament is the supreme law-maker in Britain and then, as now, determined the essential powers and duties of local government. Whilst local authorities could sponsor their own Bills in order to achieve special powers in their areas, it was necessary to seek Parliamentary approval. But implementing Acts of Parliament was itself an important aspect of power. The local authority could influence the quality, the manner and method of delivery of centrally derived measures. Moreover, local government could derive prestige and

power at the local level from undertaking its growing array of powers and duties. By the same token weak national responses to pressing local problems could cause the local authority to take responsibility and criticism.

Whilst there was much power within local government and often strong links with the locality this aspect should not be over-stated. The democratic base of local government lagged behind that for central government. In the period under study full democratic voting rights were still denied certain groups at local elections and many of those with the franchise were relative newcomers to the electorate. The overwhelming ethos of local government in this period was that it was the prerogative of the well-to-do, middle-class business and commercial interests. Ordinary working people were not encouraged to participate and few did so.

An important aspect to the changing relationship between central and local government lies in the financial field. So long as local government was able to fund most of its activities from local rate-borne expenditure it could be said to have a significant measure of independence from Whitehall. But gradually from the 1880s onwards, as the role of local government expanded, so the necessity for reliance on the Treasury grew. During the 1920s important changes in the ability of local government to collect rates meant that the balance in the financial power moved markedly toward central government. This tendency to centralism occurs at all levels of government and is an important feature of the inter-war period. In some ways such a tendency could be said to aid the current towards more state management and planning. On the other hand it was also a powerful weapon in the hand of those who held the key reins of state power and was frequently seen as an anti-democratic factor. These features, together with the



changing character of government in terms of powers, duties and staffing will be considered in separate sections covering the two tiers.

#### (i) Central Government

As we have already seen, the First World War brought about a massive growth in the scope of central government. Despite the dismantling of some of these functions after the war many remained and it was necessary to make a substantial re-structuring of the main Departments of Government as soon as peace returned. Between 1918 and 1919 a number of new Ministries were created. The new Ministry of Health consolidated into one department all the powers and duties of the old Local Government Board, Insurance Commissioners and a whole range of health functions previously dispersed among a number of separate Boards and Ministries. It was to this Ministry that the function of Town Planning was linked, having previously been under the control of the Local Government Board. A new Ministry of Transport was created in 1919 to co-ordinate all means of transport, to take over responsibilities for electricity, roads, bridges and vehicular traffic. In 1919 the old Board of Agriculture and Fisheries was re-organised into a Ministry of the same name and its structure also re-organised.

#### Growth in the State Machine

As well as creating new departments of state, all aspects of central government took on board new duties as the machinery of government expanded. The Civil Service grew from 135,721, before the First World War, to over 359,000 by 1931.<sup>(2)</sup> For a period after the war it seemed that there would be a growth of regional administration. The Ministry of Health, under its housing powers, established nine housing regions with regional staff to oversee the new compulsory housing duties of the

local authorities. These staffs were, however, disbanded in 1921 as part of the economies demanded by the Geddes Report.<sup>(3)</sup> The Ministry of Transport also maintained a regional staff, called Divisional Road Engineers, and these survived the 1921 cuts. No other main government department adopted regional systems and the pattern of strong central location and direction of government affairs was maintained in the inter-war period.

### Concern over Central Power

Mounting unease about the growth of the Civil Service and, more particularly its accumulating power, was voiced in the study period. The Macmillan Committee of 1931 struck a chord when it said,

"The most distinctive indication of the change of outlook of the government of this country in recent years has been its growing preoccupation, irrespective of party, with the management of the life of the people.... Parliament finds itself increasingly engaged in legislation which has for its conscious aim the regulation of day-to-day affairs of the community, and now intervenes in matters formerly thought to be entirely outside its scope. This new orientation has its dangers, as well as its merits...It is of vital importance that the new policy, while truly promoting liberty by securing better conditions of life for the people of this country, should not, in its zeal for interference, deprive them of their initiative and independence which are the nation's most valuable assets." <sup>(4)</sup>

Lord Hewart, the Lord Chief Justice, sparked off a major debate about the powers of civil servants when, in 1929, he unprecedentedly went to the press to make a strong attack on the unbridled growth in powers of the executive arm of government. Lord Hewart's articles were later

published as, 'The New Despotism', 1929, (5) and led later that year to the setting up of the 'Committee on Ministers' Powers' chaired by Lord Donoughmore.(6) Lord Hewart's main concern was that there was an increasing aspect of government departments' authority and activity that lay beyond the reach of ordinary law. This 'despotic power', as Hewart referred to it, arose from the system of delegating legislative power to government departments. This had been a creeping phenomena that probably had its basis in the problem of coping with an increasing body of legislation. When Acts of Parliament were relatively few then the whole of Parliament could afford to decide all the details. But with the rise in modern government came the rise in the need for delegation in order to cope with the administration of the state. In the complexity of running an industrial country the role of the Civil Service assumes a key, pivotal role. Ministers become less and less able to control the day-to-day affairs of their departments and relied more and more on their officials. Officials were often in a position, not only to administer but also to direct policy. The wide use of conferring upon Ministers the power to make regulations, rules and orders was seen to place such actions outside the purview of the Courts since they could be seen as provided by the enabling Act. Thus arose Hewart's concern, based upon experience, that Ministers and officials could abrogate to themselves powers which other citizens did not have, the power to act without being taken to Court if their actions were deemed to injuriously affect other individuals. The Donoughmore Committee was required to look at just this phenomenon and to suggest what safeguards were desirable to secure the sovereignty of Parliament and the supremacy of Law.

### The Donoughmore Report

The Donoughmore Report was issued in 1932 and failed to make any



radical recommendations. It did however recognise that the delegation of legislative and judicial powers to administrative organs was both practical and inevitable given the nature of modern British society. Its recommendations were in the nature of pragmatic and schematic suggestions for rationalising the process. Its most important suggestion was that every Bill containing a proposal to confer law-making power on a Minister should be subject to the scrutiny of a small Standing Committee who would also scrutinise every rule and regulation made by a Department in the exercise of delegated legislative power.<sup>(7)</sup> This suggestion was never properly implemented due to the opposition of Ministers who felt that it was impractical, would duplicate existing committee stage work, and fetter the Minister in his ability to use discretion in deciding matters of policy. On the issue of the judicial powers of Ministers the Report declared,

"There is nothing radically wrong about the existing practice of Parliament in permitting the exercise of judicial and quasi-judicial powers by Ministers and of judicial power by Ministerial Tribunals." <sup>(8)</sup>

The recommendations accordingly simply sought to strengthen the interests of ordinary citizens within the existing set-up. W.A. Robson writing in 1932 considered that this was the most disappointing aspect of the whole report.<sup>(9)</sup> He had wanted a "boldly conceived system of administrative courts separated to a large extent from the ordinary routine of departmental administration and free from indirect ministerial interference." <sup>(10)</sup>

Although the end result of the Donoughmore inquiry was more a pragmatic tinkering rather than a radical re-organisation, Sheail (1983) takes the view that it wielded a subtle and significant

influence in Whitehall leading to constraints on departmental initiatives and may 'go far in explaining why the full potential of the Town and Country Planning Act of 1932 was never realised'.<sup>(11)</sup> Sheail's point is that the 1932 Act contained wide powers of discretion and initiative but that the Minister and the department were reluctant to use such powers in a clear open way due to the strong feelings that existed on the use of delegated powers as revealed by Lord Hewart and the Donoughmore Committee. This may be so, but such inhibitions were less noticeable when it came to limiting the effectiveness of local development schemes and restricting local authority capital expenditure.

#### Central Power and Loan Sanctions

As Ward, 1986, shows, the secret loan sanction blacklists operated by the Ministry of Health between 1922 and 1939, known as List Q, actually intensified after 1932.<sup>(12)</sup> Ward also makes the point that the Ministry of Health faced in two opposite directions in the inter-war years over town planning. On the one hand they urged local authorities to undertake statutory town planning, on the other, they restricted investment possibilities, which would have made part of the plans a reality, by preventing certain local authorities from obtaining the necessary loan sanctions. List Q operated as a financial arm of the Treasury inside the Ministry of Health to ensure that the high spending local authorities were denied the means to expend further sums of capital on projects such as roads. Yet it was these very authorities that, hit by high unemployment and poverty, needed permission to build schemes to assist the development of their areas, as laid down, very often, in approved town planning schemes. This illustrates the relationship between the central and local states in a useful way. Local authorities were encouraged to undertake certain

duties, like town planning, by central government. But the self-same central government also controlled the means whereby action could be implemented. Many at local government level became wary and cynical of central government when caught in this double bind.

## (ii) Local Government

The structure of local government in 1919 was essentially that set some 30 years previously in 1888 by the Municipal Boroughs Act and the Local Government Act. These historic Acts had established the system of County Councils, County Borough Councils and Municipal Boroughs. A later Act formulated the powers of the Urban and Rural District Councils within the county areas. In addition, Parish Councils continued to operate at the base. This three tier system was further complicated by the administration of the Poor Law by the Guardians of the Poor on the basis of Unions of Parishes. This administration of relief was maintained until 1929 when the Boards of Guardians were abolished and Public Assistance Authorities constituted for County and County Borough areas. (13)

### The Changing Structure of Local Government

Whilst the acts passed in the last 20 years of the nineteenth century set the overall structure of local government there was considerable movement within this structure reflecting the growth of urbanisation and the mobility of populations. In the main the key change was to new or expanded towns and suburbs leading to demands of urban authorities for either an upgrading of status of or an extension of area. The counties were the main losers in this process. In the 36 years up to 1925 the counties lost over 3 million people, 350,000 acres and £14.5 million in rateable value. In the same period the number of County Boroughs increased from 61 to 82 and there were over 100 town



extensions.(14) But these changes rarely occurred without a fight which involved inquiries and eventual Parliamentary approval. Several very populous urban areas remained urban or rural districts. The 50,000 population threshold required to press a claim for County Borough status was raised in 1926 to 75,000. (15)

### Local Government Re-organisation

The 1920s was a very active period for the reconsideration of the scope and structure of local government. Between 1923 and 1929 the Royal Commission on Local Government produced three reports.(16) The first report in 1925 covered the constitution and extension of County Boroughs and led to an Act in 1926 setting population levels needed to apply for County Borough status. The second report of 1928 looked at a wide range of issues including powers and duties of different local authorities. The findings of the Royal Commission's second report were taken up in important sections of the 1929 Local Government Act, which dealt with increasing the powers of County Councils. Among other things the Act enhanced the County Council's abilities to join with the other local authorities to undertake town planning and also to undertake town planning on a county basis if district authorities agreed. The 1929 Act also encompassed the de-rating proposals, although these stemmed from Winston Churchill and the Treasury rather than the Royal Commission. The third and final report of the Royal Commission issued in 1929 considered staff, organisation, and Parish Councils. Much of its work was enacted in the 1933 Local Government Act.

### Local Franchise

Local government franchise was extended in a 1928 Act which gave greater voting rights to women.(17) But two restrictions continued to

ensure that the local franchise was much smaller than that for Parliamentary elections. Those who lived in furnished accommodation were still denied the vote as were those who failed to meet the 'qualifying period' of residence of three months.

### The Organisation of London

London had always been a special area for local government purposes. During much of its history there were three 'Londons' for administrative purposes. There was the City of London Corporation covering the square mile of the old city; there was the County of London, established in 1888, which after 1899 shared power and duties with 28 municipal boroughs; and finally there was the Greater London Metropolitan Police Area, originally established in 1829, and after 1875, also adopted by the Registrar General for statistical purposes. After the First World War there was much concern about the government of London. The London County Council pressed the Government to extend the County boundary. The problems posed by town planning and road planning indicated the need for a much wider administrative area. In 1920 the Committee on Unhealthy Areas established by the Ministry of Health reported that public health, town planning and housing needed to be dealt with as one problem by a Greater London Authority which might have to include the Home Counties.<sup>(18)</sup> In 1921 the government responded to the mounting critics of London Government by setting up a Royal Commission on London Government.<sup>(19)</sup> But these initiatives came to nothing and London relied on a number of ad hoc arrangements in traffic matters, arterial road planning and town planning throughout the inter-war period. This led to continuing criticism and there was also much popular debate on the future of London.<sup>(20)</sup>

## Joint Committees

Joint Committees to cover services and activities that overlapped local authority boundaries was a common aspect of local government during the inter-war years. Joint bodies existed for transport and utility undertakings. Joint Town Planning Committees became one of the main organisational mechanisms for undertaking town planning and their role and growth will be considered in a subsequent chapter.

## Growing Role of Local Authorities

The powers and duties of local authorities continued to grow relentlessly during the twenties and early thirties. The most notable areas of increased responsibility were in housing, town planning, roads, welfare and education. But there were many other areas involving new statutory committees such as Agriculture as well as new services in the field of Blind Welfare, etc. Taken together the statutory and permissive powers of local authorities meant that there were very few areas of life that could be untouched by the local authority. All of which would suggest that the role of local authorities in this country could be said to have seen an enhancement of power. Staffing also increased, albeit slowly, and a growing professional input was also introduced. But as the statutory responsibilities increased so, too, did central government financial control. Rate borne expenditure became a reducing feature of local government finance in the period under consideration.

## Local Authority Finance

Local authority finance rested on four main sources: rates; government grants; trading profits and payments for services; and fees, fines and loans. Valuation and rating is a complex field and there



were many problems that had accumulated prior to the First World War. Change was achieved in the Rating and Valuation Act, 1925. This Act succeeded in creating a degree of uniformity and established simplified methods. Essentially all powers and duties involved in making and collecting rates were given over to local authorities, except county councils. In addition, the first steps in de-rating agricultural land and buildings were taken by giving them 75% relief. The Local Government Act of 1929 completed that process. In addition this Act also extended de-rating to empty industrial buildings and 'one-man' factories. It further reduced rating to industrial properties generally by 75%.<sup>(21)</sup> The consequence of these measures of de-rating was to make local authorities more dependent on central government who were obliged to make good a substantial part of the lost income.

Central government financial support to local authorities had originally begun on the basis of specific allocations for specific functions. These 'grants-in-aid', as they were called, commenced early in the nineteenth century. One of the first, in 1833 was for building school premises. After the First World War grants-in-aid expanded rapidly to cover new activities such as housing, maternity and child care, land drainage, roads and unemployment relief. The 1929 Local Government Act marked a new era of local government finance.

Henceforth the term 'Block Grant' would be used and the part played by such a general grant and the formula used to arrive at the figure would become a familiar aspect of central/local government financial arrangements. After the 1929 Act grants-in-aid were only retained for education, police, smallholdings, and the registration of electors. All other activities were to be funded from a Block Grant which was supposed to cover all previous grants and the deficiency arising from the de-rating arrangements.<sup>(22)</sup> In practice many authorities complained

of being worse off under the new arrangements and as a consequence the burden on remaining ratepayers increased. The ability of local authorities to borrow money from the Public Works Loans Board or the money market remained heavily restricted by the central government. Ministerial sanction was required before loans could be obtained and this put considerable power in the hands of Whitehall, who, as we have seen, operated blacklists for those authorities deemed 'unsuitable' for further capital expenditure.

### Administration and Planning

As the pressure for more and more involvement in social and economic affairs grew, so the size, complexity and sophistication of the state's administrative framework expanded. In one broad sense this process helped to add weight for more planning. As in large companies, the logic of adopting greater degrees of control and rational management became an increasing part of the ethos of central and local government. This should not be over-stated. The 'muddling-through' approach still characterised the corridors of power in Whitehall and Town Hall, but a breeze of planning did blow down such corridors. The ambitious administrator was always likely to argue for extending his own role and to see opportunities in more linked and organised activities.

A countervailing factor was the under-resourcing of government activities which could fuel cynicism and a lack of enthusiasm in undertaking additional and new areas of work. Throughout the study period the machinery of local and central government did not adequately match the new powers and duties placed upon it by Parliament. The 1931 political and economic crisis led to reductions in the salaries of civil servants and local officials and at no time could it be said that adequate staffing levels prevailed in central and local government. At

the local level the desire to keep rates to a minimum often meant that the atmosphere was 'penny-pinching'.

Advocacy of an enhanced central administrative machinery to deliver more planning grew in the study period. As the next chapter will demonstrate, there was considerable debate about the need to adopt the strategic approach of wartime to such peacetime problems as unemployment. Talk of the value of Economic General Staffs, of Inner Cabinets and other centralised mechanisms of government became something of a vogue in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Within the town planning movement there was, after 1931 particularly, a call for national planning frameworks, something that was eventually conceded during the Second World War.

At the local government level the strength of individual departments within authorities precluded a strong corporate approach to local problems. But the County and Town Clerks were very powerful figures who were able to encompass a County and Borough viewpoint. Town planning was generally accepted as a valid activity within the local authority machine, but usually as an adjunct of the County or Borough Engineer or Surveyor's Department. The Joint Town Planning Committee was a vehicle which led to greater collaboration between authorities over broader policy areas than any other local joint activity.

The local authority associations proved to be very supportive of town planning. They had played an important role in gaining statutory town planning in the first place and were prominent in 1931/32 in its defence.

The next, and last chapter in this Part explores the arguments for and against planning that surfaced as a major political debate in the 1920s and 1930s.



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## Chapter 12 - The Pressure for Planning - The Political Debate

One of the most important contexts for town planning in inter-war Britain was in the realm of ideas. Whilst mounting urban problems gave an every-ready concrete argument for town planning the battle for such action could be seen to be determined by the broader implications of what this implied for the way society was organised.

During the 1920s and 1930s the ideas for and against introducing a planned approach to organising society took the form of a major political and philosophical debate. This debate gathered momentum in the 1930s and by the 1940s appeared to be won in favour of the 'planners'. The inauguration of the debate took place in the 15 years following the end of the First World War.

This chapter examines the roots of the debate, building on arguments presented in Chapter 4, the way the debate unfolded in Britain and its international context. Finally, reference is made to the impact of the debate at the time, particularly so far as a government response was concerned.

### (1) The Roots of the Planning Debate

Modern debates about planning tend to reflect a reaction to the process of industrialisation and the creation of the industrial proletariat in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries. These dramatic changes had been brought about as a result of a powerful individualist ideology that espoused the free working of a market economy and broke the power of old feudal restrictions based on landed power. The nurturing of capitalism through an ideology of laissez-faire led to a countervailing approach based on the idea of a socialist society which was itself rooted in the concept of planning.



Socialism was presented in a variety of guises from the romantic visions of the utopians to the dictatorship of the proletariat, espoused by Marx and Engels. Marx and Engels even went further to look forward to a non-class system which they called communism.<sup>(1)</sup>

The rationales for the two opposing positions were, on the one hand, an approach to government, administration and public policy which sought as little management to society as possible, believing that the market forces were the most efficient and effective way to regulate man's economic and social life. On the other hand the socialist model considered the workings of the market to be erratic, anarchic and producing much dislocation and personal suffering. A socialist society, it was claimed, would replace individualism by collectivism, laissez-faire by planning. Under such a system the social and economic resources of society would be controlled and regulated according to pre-arranged criteria which would reflect the interests of the mass of people rather than a few who owned or had a major interest in capital.

In point of fact a thorough going laissez-faire position was never adopted by government due to the practical problems of such an approach. Indeed it could be said that the very existence of government indicated a measure of intervention from the very beginning. Be that as it may, much of the first fifty years or so of Industrial Capitalism in this country was dominated by those who believed in laissez-faire and sought to restrict and oppose any extension to a state role in social and economic affairs.

### Philosophical Radicalism

The philosophical school of thought which dominated Britain throughout the nineteenth century and remained a major influence in the twentieth century is Liberalism or Philosophical Radicalism. But as a school of

political thought it lacked clarity that led to various interpretations and often bolstered conservatism rather than fostered a radical approach. As Sabine (1963) says,

"Its fundamental weakness was rather that as a philosophy it was never clear and never critical of its assumptions or its deductions. .... Philosophical Radicalism was, in truth, largely an ad hoc philosophy, and it was also largely the spokesman for a single social interest which it identified, hastily though not hypocritically, with the well-being of the whole community." (2)

The founder of the philosophy was Jeremy Bentham whose key work, 'Principles of Morals and Legislation' was published in 1789.(3) In this and other works Bentham outlined the 'Greatest Happiness' principle and the theory of 'Utility'.(4) Utilitarianism, as it is often called, came to be the guiding approach of liberals and gradually became adopted as key principles in jurisprudence and administration. However, rather than offer a critical challenge to the status quo such a philosophy was easily adapted to a kind of social laissez-faire to complement the economic laissez-faire of Adam Smith(5) and David Ricardo. The reformist implications of Utilitarianism or, at least, the theory of the 'Greatest Happiness' could and did give rise to later interpretations and philosophical developments that were to provide a radical edge to social policy. Such a turn was inevitable given the huge social problems engendered by the industrial revolution and the steadfast refusal of successive governments steeped in Benthamite principles to undertake a more interventionist role, even when it would palpably have led to the greater happiness of the greater number!



## The Liberalism of J.S. Mill & Others

These later departures from classical liberal philosophy were chiefly identified with the work of J.S. Mill.<sup>(6)</sup> Herbert Spencer<sup>(7)</sup> and Thomas Hill Green<sup>(8)</sup> were also key figures. It was Mill who rescued Bentham's theory of 'Utility' from the egoistic and pompous 'Gradgrinds' illustrated by Dickens. Mill imparted to Benthamism a moral and ethical framework that led inexorably to the adoption of social welfare and then on to a collective view of society. Allison (1975) prefers to see such a link as inherent in Bentham's own position and says,

"The principles which for the most part dominate modern planning or, for that matter, administration in Britain, are to be found in a single book: Jeremy Bentham's 'Principles of Morals and Legislation'. " (10)

Such a judgement is open to doubt but it is clear that the roots of modern planning in Britain can be traced back to the philosophy of Liberalism, particularly in the latter half of the nineteenth century when numerous reforms were enacted which inevitably moved governments into more and more areas of social action and increased the role of the state in social and economic affairs. Such an approach even penetrated the Conservative Party under Disraeli, who rightly saw the importance from an electoral point of view, given the extension of franchise, of adopting capitalism with a human face. These arguments are by no means redundant within contemporary Conservatism.

By the beginning of the twentieth century the limits of Victorian reformism as promulgated by Disraelian Conservatives and Gladstonian Liberals was becoming apparent. Key economic problems that were not immediately apparent in the heyday of nineteenth century capitalism began to become all too clear in the Edwardian era. The rise of



structural unemployment, the growth of organised labour and growing expectations of a better standard of living for ordinary people, posed the need for more sophisticated levels of administration and state intervention. Added to which was the very real need to provide a much more managed approach to the new phases of suburbanisation caused by the combination of transport improvements, electricity and rising standards of living. John Stuart Mill provided the important break with the old Philosophical Radicals who shored up the non-interventionist spirit of Victorianism. He opened the way for thinkers in the latter half of the nineteenth century to re-define Liberalism. Green and other Oxford Idealists did away with the rigid line between economics and politics by which the older liberals had excluded the state from interfering with the operation of a free market. To quote Sabine.

"Green's liberalism....was a frank acceptance of the state as a positive agency to be used at any point where legislation could be shown to contribute to 'positive freedom', in short, for any purpose that added to the general welfare without creating worse evils than it removed." (11)

### Reformism

It was this shift in the parameters of capitalist thinking which could truly be said to give rise to modern capitalist planning. Its first comprehensive application was probably the great reforming Liberal Government of 1906-1914. Then, together with Fabian socialists, between which the similarities are easier to spot than the differences, the new Liberals dominated the thinking behind much of the First World War 'Reconstruction' ideas, some of which found their way on to the statute books in the period 1918 to 1921.

In some ways it can be said that Fabian socialism was a revision of <sup>r</sup>Maxism, with similar motives and of a parallel kind to the revision by later liberals of Liberalism.. Mill, Green, Spencer and others all sought to provide the groundwork for a reform that would accommodate the legitimate aspirations of the mass of the people. To do this it was necessary to revise the pure individualism of Bentham and the laissez-faire classical economics of Smith and Ricardo. Keynes was to put further touches to the economic aspect of the debate during the twentieth century. For socialists the framework for the debate was very different but the same pressures for accommodation with capitalism arose. Marx and Engels bestrode the socialist movement with their well worked-out theoretical critiques of capitalism and their revolutionary message to workers everywhere. To those for whom revolution was unattractive or seemed doomed to a distant future, the need was to revise marxism in order to provide an ideological basis for their policies. On the continent the work of Bernstein<sup>(12)</sup> and Kautsky<sup>(13)</sup> was far more influenced by the thoughts of Marx, although their approach to socialist politics ended up as very similar. In Britain, Fabianism, which became the intellectual powerhouse of Labour politics, viewed the attainment of socialism as something to be done by degrees. Reforms were for them a gradual means to socialism, at least in theory.<sup>(14)</sup>

Reformist socialists came to adopt a variety of positions in the twentieth century debate, as will be examined in the following section.

#### (ii) The Inter-War Planning Debate in Britain

Arthur Marwick, in discussing the significance of the 'planning debate' in Britain in the inter-war years, pointed out that it created a 'very large groundwork of social and political 'agreement' '. It was this

groundwork, asserts Marwick, which, laid the basis for 'the ideological structure which took Britain safely through the forties and brought her to rest in the fifties'.(15)

Marwick rather dismisses the 1920s contribution to the debate and prefers to see the gateway to discussions as the 1931 crisis.(16)

Without seeking to deny the growing richness of the debate in the 1930s it should be emphasised that there was not only a continuity of ideas that had been evolving for over a century, as outlined above, but also the singular importance of the First World War and the immediate post-war years in the foundation of the debate.

Trevor Smith provides one of the fullest accounts of the debate in his book, 'The Politics of the Corporate Economy'.(17) After pointing to the major stimulus of the war to notions of government intervention he analyses the positions of those who fanned the flames of the debate in the post-war period. Marwick concedes that the 'germs' of the debate lay in the rush back to unmanaged capitalism in the 1920s. But, as Smith points out, there were during the 1920s some very important contributions to debating positions, particularly by pro-planners of various persuasions. A number of socialists were first in the field, spurred perhaps by a heightened sense of world change in their favour following the Russian Revolution and the end to the monarchy in Germany.

### Fabian & Guild Socialist Ideas

Sidney and Beatrice Webb, prominent Fabian socialists, wrote two key documents in the aftermath of the war. The first, by Sidney Webb in 1918, became the programme of the Labour Party, 'Labour and the New Social Order'.(18) This document was based on four main principles: the idea of a 'national minimum'; democratic control of industry; financial



reform; and surplus wealth to be employed for the common good. Its basis and ethos was distinctly Fabian.<sup>(19)</sup> In more detail the second key text, 'A Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of G.B.', 1920,<sup>(20)</sup> was among the first to argue that extensive economic intervention by the state would require considerable adaptation of the machinery of government. The Webbs were not the only ones to raise the question of democracy under a planning regime. Indeed as Smith points out, the debate between planners and non-planners tended to revolve around the issue of democracy and individual freedom.<sup>(21)</sup>

The Guild Socialists although small in numbers attracted some important thinkers at one time or another. Tawney, Bertrand Russell and G.D.H. Cole were among its adherents after the First World War.<sup>(22)</sup> Cole in 'Guild Socialism Re-stated', 1920,<sup>(23)</sup> recognised the dangers of centralised state control and advocated workplace democracy through guilds. The Webbs' answer to the issue was to advocate two Parliaments, a political and an economic one. Finer, a Fabian socialist thought that the Webbs' ideas were too impractical and Cole's too radical. Instead Finer in 'Representative Government and a Parliament of Industry', 1923, <sup>(24)</sup> sought to resurrect the National Industrial Conference which had been convened in 1919. The Government of the day had hoped to use the Conference to head off rising labour troubles. It comprised 500 Trade Union representatives and 300 employer representatives. It drew up a programme of far reaching reforms which the government accepted but never implemented. The N.I.C. was dissolved in the 1921 retrenchment. Finer resurrected the idea in the form of a proposed National Economic Council to advise government. Such an idea was to receive many echoes from within all parties during the inter-war years.

## The Independent Labour Party

The Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.) entered the 'planning debate' after the failure of the first Labour Government of 1924. The record of this Government had disappointed many on the left and particularly those in the I.L.P. who tended to be more radical. The policy document which gained most attention was, 'Socialism in Our Time', 1926, written by H.N. Brailsford, E.F. Wise and Creech Jones. In essence the ideas of the I.L.P. at this time were significant in that they tried to develop left reformist policies. In order to do this they derived some of their theoretical thinking from J.A. Hobson, one of the first economists to challenge classical economical theory and a precursor to Keynes. Hobson had pointed to the under consumption of society caused by low wages.<sup>(25)</sup> The I.L.P. drew from this to suggest adopting minimum wages, a bold extension of economic planning. A specific document was produced called 'The Living Wage', 1926. In this the I.L.P. put forward the policy that if industries refused to provide a minimum wage then they should either be nationalised, or, if the industry was in too bad a state to pay, then 'rationalised'. In addition the I.L.P. called for government control of banking and credit. But these ideas were never to be adopted by the Labour Party which, as the 1924 government was to show and the 1929 second Labour Government was to emphasise, was dominated by classical thinking on the capitalist economy. Philip Snowden the Labour Chancellor in both governments no doubt believed in a socialist society but in the meantime acted in the tradition of Liberal Chancellors of the classical economic school.

## The Liberal Party Contribution

In fact it was the Liberals who, after their disastrous electoral showing in 1924, were the most open party in Britain to new policies



and ideas. They established a Liberal Industrial Inquiry in 1925 which included among its members Keynes, Lloyd George, Herbert Samuel, Seebohm Rowntree and Ramsey Muir. Its findings were published in 1928 in what became a key text of the 'middle-way planners', 'Britain's Industrial Future' popularly known as the 'Yellow Book'. In many ways the policies outlined in the book, which has been referred to before, were in advance of the times. They argued for a reorganisation of industry, for an Economic General Staff, for a policy in industrial relations, for co-partnership and profit sharing. But, all of these policies were to be achieved within capitalism, as a way of ameliorating the damaging class tensions. The book ranged wide but its main underlying theme was that if Britain was to overcome its economic problems then it must do so in a framework of co-operation, utilising all the best skills and that controls and management of the economy must increase. The immediate influence of this message was perhaps slight. In the longer term it helped to lay the basis for the mixed economy theories of the post-war consensus.

### The Conservative Stances

The Conservatives tended naturally to fall into the traditional camp of classical economics and to decry too much state intervention. Once they resumed outright political control in 1922 they tried to dismantle as much of the post-war traces of wartime controls and regulations as possible. They also eschewed any idea of seeking a rapprochement with Labour, i.e. the Trade Unions, and set out on a course of confrontation. Critics argued that these policies ignored the very real needs of industry to sustain growth and to fuel demand through consumption. The orthodox reply to this was essentially monetarist and rested on the desire to restore Britain to the Gold Standard with its accompanying visions of a return to the glory of Empire days with



Britain as the centre of financial stability. After 1926 a number of backbench Conservatives began to outline a challenge to Party policy. Of particular note was, 'Industry and the State : A Conservative View'<sup>(26)</sup> already referred to in Chapter 8. The authors were all young members of the Tory Party who adopted the idea of establishing an Economic General Staff - indeed military analogies were popular in the period after the war. They also called for a programme of state intervention to assist industry to rationalise and become more efficient.

Whilst the ideas of the radical Tories did not seem to have much effect on the Party leadership they did help to shape opinion and over the following three or four years a number of prominent figures in the Party began to come out with elements of their ideas. Winston Churchill, for instance, in his 1930 Romanes Lecture<sup>(27)</sup> accepted that the economy was in crisis and that what was required was more state intervention rather than more laissez-faire. He, too, advocated an advisory economic organisation, in his case an Economic Sub-Panel consisting of twenty per cent of M.P's chosen relative to their strength in Parliament. A year later Lord Eustace Percy wrote a book called, 'Democracy on Trial : A Preface to an Industrial Policy'<sup>(28)</sup> which went further than Churchill and called for a Ministry of Economic Development containing a highly powerful central Bureau of Statistics. He also outlined ideas for streamlining the Cabinet, echoing many of Mosley's ideas.

### The Response to Crisis

The crisis surrounding the massive upsurge in unemployment in the later 1920s and the linked financial problems of the second Labour Government of 1929-1931 culminated in the political crisis of 1931 and the return

of a National Government headed by the former Labour leader, Ramsey MacDonald. All of these events spurred on the ideas of the 'planners' both in terms of greater state management of the economy and for an overhaul of the Government apparatus. The socialist alternative of a fully planned society was never a serious proposition since no Party advocating such an immediate change was in a position to challenge for power. The Communist Party had been galvanising the unemployed through the National Unemployed Workers' Movement and had arranged several mass demonstrations. But, its political strength among other workers was much less. The labour movement remained in the firm grip of those who rejected a revolutionary path but were uncertain how to proceed when in power. The Labour Government of 1929 failed to adopt any radical policies for dealing with the worsening state of unemployment which itself reflected a national trading weakness in a declining world trade situation.

#### Mosley & Corporate Planning

O. Mosley began his political prominence, not unlike Mussolini, as a socialist. During the 1920s he advocated a bold form of Keynesian policies (although pre-Keynes' own specific formulations).(29) When he became Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the second Labour Government, with special responsibility for unemployment he put together his own proposals in a memorandum to cabinet.(30) The Mosley Memorandum, later published as The 'Mosley Manifesto', 1930, (31) advocated a range of different economic policies including a substantial package of public works which he had discussed with Keynes, and a major change to administration. This latter aspect of Mosley's thinking is illuminating in the light of his later direction. He wanted a senior or inner cabinet to direct economic affairs backed up by standing committees and advisory panels of experts. In his revised



Manifesto he goes further and seeks an even stronger central leadership, a junta of 5 led by the Prime Minister to take executive decisions without recourse to Parliament immediately. He also sought a National Planning Organisation to arrange the rationalisation of industry.

Mosley's programme was elaborated after his defeat in the Labour Party in October, 1930. With the assistance of his supporters at that time, J. Strachey, N. Bevan, Allen Young and W.J. Brown, it was published as the 'National Policy'.<sup>(32)</sup> In March, 1931, the New Party was formed adopting the National Policy as its programme. Only 4 Labour M.P.'s joined Mosley's new party and all were expelled from the Labour Party.<sup>(33)</sup> Whilst planning features were strengthened in the National Policy so too was the emerging corporatist structure for government. The planning aspects included a National Planning Council to co-ordinate industrial boards and a National Investment Board to mobilise the country's capital resources. As Mosley developed the Party, later to be called the British Union of Fascists, the notion of a Corporate State with functional corporations representing twenty industries and the concept of strong central leadership emerged.<sup>(34)</sup>

Fascism was to have little political appeal in this country. The rise of European dictators based on Fascist ideals did not go down well in a country nurtured through decades of growing representative democracy, even if the economy was in crisis. But the ideas of Mosley played a part in the planning debate. On the positive side they brought to bear some explicit concepts of planning. On the negative side they tended to strengthen the arguments of those who said one could only have planning in a totalitarian system.



## 'Middle-Way' Planning

Non-socialist planners took further strides in developing a 'middle-way' policy during the 1930s. The 1931 crisis had shaken many traditional thinkers out of their apathy and there was a more ready response to those who advocated greater state intervention and financial and industrial management. Although Keynes' fully worked out approach to economic questions was not published until 1930,<sup>(35)</sup> many of his practical remedies were being advocated in the 1920s. His expansionism based on loans, acceptance of some inflation, coming off the gold standard and a programme of public works were all currency among the 'planners' several years before his theoretical work.<sup>(36)</sup>

One of the first people to use the term 'middle-way' in this country was Sir Arthur Salter, who wrote a very influential book, 'Recovery', 1932.<sup>(37)</sup> Salter, politically independent, was also one of the first to use the term 'planning' and so he set the terms of the debate after 1931. Salter explicitly calls for a new way rather than a compromise, although it is hard to see how to avoid the notion of compromise in his concept. He thought that a mixed economy would be neither capitalist nor socialist and, therefore, anticipates many of the ideological stances of those who advocated consensus after the Second World War. Salter wanted planned economic intervention with government as the guardian, although like others, he recognised the need to bring in advisory skills and hence the need for a National Economic Council.

Harold Macmillan clearly derived much of his thinking from Salter when he published 'Reconstruction' in 1933.<sup>(38)</sup> In a more detailed way Macmillan tried to synthesise the individualist and collectivist arguments. But, true to his Conservative colours, Macmillan was always explicitly in favour of capitalism.

As for policies, Macmillan tended to repeat ideas espoused before, such as the need for a Central Economic Council and specific industrial councils. Five years later Macmillan published his 'Middle Way', 1938,(39) which backed up earlier arguments with the use of research findings and international examples.

The ideas of Salter, Macmillan and others, gave rise to an organised effort to achieve greater political impact. In 1934 the Industrial Reorganisation League was formed in which Macmillan played a leading role along with Lord Melchett, Seebohm Rowntree, Israel Sieff and Oliver Lyttleton.(40) Lord Melchett introduced an Enabling Bill to the House of Lords in November, 1934, designed to make statutory provision for industries to rationalise their structures voluntarily. Fifteen industries were covered and the idea was that if a majority of firms in these specified industries desired to re-organise into more efficient units they could do so under the overall supervision of the Board of Trade.(41) In 1934 another political grouping, cutting a cross party lines was formed called The Next Five Years Group. Chaired by Clifford Allen, formerly of the I.L.P., members included Salter, Macmillan and Lloyd George. Its main publication 'The Next Five Years : An Essay in Political Agreement', 1935, (42) echoed earlier calls for economic planning and reform of government machinery. The General Election of 1935 led to its demise. It was resurrected by Clifford Allen in 1936 and continued to promote the case for industrial rationalisation. For a while it produced a journal, 'The New Outlook'.(43)

### The Socialist Arguments

The socialist place in the debate was essentially to bolster the case for a mixed economy. On the more specific issue of planning, Barbara Wootton made an important contribution with 'Plan or No Plan',

1934.(44) This book set out to make a powerful case for planning and in it Wootton advocates a Planning Commission. In ideological terms the work seems to derive much from what might be termed, a 'rational-efficient' approach to human affairs such as can be seen in the Webbs and also H.G. Wells. Wells had published a book in 1928 called 'The Open Conspiracy' which was, in effect, a call for 'best brains' to run society in an efficient and rational way.(45) G.D.H. Cole in his prolific writing shifted away from Guild Socialism but continued to espouse the need for new forms of democracy in a planned system. Cole's contribution is in some ways under-valued. He sought to grapple with the very real problems of worker democracy under a socialist system, an alternative to Stalinism. Cole, particularly in his books in the later 1930s, anticipates some of the institutional changes of the 1960s but in a different context to one he would have wished.

The theoretical basis for socialists embracing the concept of the mixed economy was being undertaken in the 1930s by a number of academics, notably Evan Durbin.(47) In mainstream Labour politics Hugh Dalton's 'Practical Socialism for Britain' (1935) and the work of Douglas Jay, 'The Socialist Case' (1937) were also influential. Their ideas are not dealt with here since their influence falls outside the study period. However, both became major figures in Labour Governments after the war. Hugh Dalton in particular, as the recent biography by B. Pimlott illustrates, was an important figure in developing both economic and town planning policies during and after the Second World War.(48)

### The Anti-Planners

The case for the anti-planners did not really begin to be stated with force and in publications until after 1931. The main impetus for its



articulation came from abroad, particularly Hayek. In 1935 Hayek edited a book called, 'Collectivist Economic Planning', putting the counter view to planning and increased state intervention in economic affairs.<sup>(49)</sup> But Hayek's full position, particularly the view that planning leads to totalitarianism was not to be fully stated until the publication of his famous book, 'The Road to Serfdom', in 1944.<sup>(50)</sup> Hayek's work was particularly influential in the light of 'Cold War' developments in the 1940s and 1950s when the Stalinist Terror was at its height. It has also received a new vogue in the later 1970s and 1980s with the advent of a New Toryism which derives much of its intellectual stimulus from Hayek.

In this country the economic case against planning was put by Lionel Robbins in 'The Great Depression, 1934.<sup>(51)</sup> But in general, the pro-planners not only appeared to win the debate in terms of their literary output, they also appeared to be riding the tide of history both in Britain and abroad.

### The Influence of P.E.P.

Arguably one of the most influential groups at work during the 1930s espousing the need for a planned approach was Political and Economic Planning (P.E.P.). P.E.P. was founded in 1931 and drew together a mixture of progressive industrialists, academics and professionals.<sup>(52)</sup> Its immediate formation was due to the 1931 crisis but it was also inspired by the very detailed set of proposals put forward in the Weekend Review in February, 1931, entitled, 'A National Plan for Great Britain'.<sup>(53)</sup> This 20,000 word essay was not a plan as such but, to quote the article, "the raw material for the Plan". The author is not stated but the man chiefly responsible for it was Max Nicholson who had written his own 'National Plan' earlier in 1931.<sup>(54)</sup>

Gaining initial financial backing from Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst of Dartington Hall and a group which included Sir Basil Blackett, Julian Huxley and Haldane, P.E.P. was set up with a full-time secretary, K. Lindsay. Later Israel Sieff of Marks and Spencer replaced Blackett as Chairman and he also assisted the organisation with finance. The work of P.E.P. was essentially to prepare detailed and well-researched reports and broadsheets on various aspects of planning. Between 1933 and 1939 P.E.P. issued a stream of publications aimed at influencing 'key' people in the Civil Service, Government, the Universities and Industry. P.E.P. had regular contact with 300 'personalities' of the 1930s. A Club operated at their premises in central London and occasional large dinners were held. In April, 1933 a fortnightly broadsheet called, 'Planning' was launched which achieved a circulation of 2,000. In addition a number of major reports were published on such issues as Housing, Social Service, Health Services, Specific Industries and Industry in general. P.E.P.'s direct influence on government policy is difficult to assess. Many of their members overlapped with other groups to form a network that included, The Next Five Years Group, The Fabian Research Department and The Royal Institute of International Affairs. P.E.P.'s influence on Industry is even harder to assess. Probably its long term effect was crucial in gaining support from industry for some measure of post-war consensus. Oliver Roskill, who chaired the Industries Group of P.E.P. in the 30s, recognised that while it did not find favour with the industrial establishment because of its radical outlook it nevertheless had a long term influence.(55)

P.E.P. enjoyed a reasonable press and also had access to the B.B.C. in the 1930s to put its views across. Both the Times and the Economist in the 1930s were relatively sympathetic to the planning argument and gave plenty of space to reviews of their work and even leading articles on occasions.(56)

### (iii) The Rationalisation of Industry

The rationalisation movement was a tendency within British industry which, whilst not consciously always part of the planning movement could be seen to operate within many of its tenets. Leslie Hannah in 'The Rise of the Corporate Economy' (1976) suggests that the rationalisation process was largely successful because of its ability to demonstrate that higher net profits could flow from appropriate structural changes.(57) Thus possible objections to an underlying ideology which rejected competition in favour of a managed capitalism and a growth of monopolisation could be overcome on the practical grounds of financial success. However, it seems likely that those who had most to gain through rationalisation were the larger firms who already adopted a modern and progressive outlook. Even so, few such firms would want to publicly acknowledge that they favoured an anti-competitive ideology.

The move towards rationalisation in Britain began to gather momentum in the 1920s and 1930s. Whilst some combinations, like the formation of Imperial Chemical Industries (I.C.I.) in 1926, received considerable publicity many occurred quietly and without fuss. The main thrust to rationalisation was essentially the new methods of mass production pioneered by Fords of America. To achieve these new productive techniques required economies of scale which in turn meant mergers and take-overs. The examples of Germany and the U.S.A. were often enthusiastically put forward as worthy of emulation. In 1928 Walter Meakin published 'The New Industrial Revolution', subtitled, Rationalisation and Post-War Tendencies of Capitalism and Labour.(58) In this book Meakin was an early leader among those who recognised the significance of the industrial changes sweeping the industrialised world and the need for Britain to keep up.



Alongside the desire for expansion and adoption of the latest production and management techniques the large, modern company also added a gloss which stressed social responsibility, humane values and the rational application of scientific principles. These latter concepts fitted neatly into the growing value-free language of the planners, itself an integral element of consensus.

#### (iv) International Planning Experiments

Foreign example was used a great deal in the planning discussion and certainly in the 1930s provided both goals to aim for and to avoid. For many on the left the example of Soviet planning was a vision of the future. The five year plan of the Soviet Union which was begun in 1928 led to admiration from a wide circle, often not necessarily associated with the left.(59) Reginald Berkeley, for instance, in his 'England's Opportunity' (1931), thought that,

"...all agree.... the striking success Russia has made of scientific planning on a national scale. When it is remembered into what chaos that country fell after the Bolshevik Revolution, the admitted results of the Five-Year-Plan are miraculous." (60)

Berkeley was no lover of the Soviets but used the success of planning there to suggest that England's only way out of its crisis was to adopt a planned approach. He advocated what he called a 'New Democracy' and a 'New Capitalism'. Such rhetoric was rife in 1931.

But many men more eminent than Berkeley came to admire the Soviet planned approach. The Webbs went somewhat overboard and published a massive tome, 'Soviet Communism - A New Civilisation', 1937,(61) which seemed to see only the clear vision of a scientific, rational system

and ignored the political and human dimension. H.G. Wells exhibited a similar approach in a second edition of the 'Open Conspiracy', 1932.(62)

Naturally the left were far more critical of fascist planning. Mussolini did receive some praise from early commentators when the direction of the new regime was unclear but generally the often quoted praise that he got the trains to run on time, cut no ice. The Spanish Civil War, ended any popular voice for a fascist style of government in this country, outside the relatively small band of Mosley supporters. It should be said, however, that The Times, under G. Dawson and many prominent establishment figures admired Hitler and bolstered a policy of appeasement to German expansion.

Most British 'planners' used the examples of Soviet Russia, Italy and later Nazi Germany as reasons to avoid the extremes and to opt for a 'middle way'. Indeed many advocates of 'planning' for Britain saw that only by adopting a managed capitalism could the dangers of totalitarianism be avoided. Macmillan in the 'Middle Way' expressed it thus,

"...the secure bulwark against reaction or revolution is an economic system that can satisfy the moderate needs of men for material welfare and security, while preserving at the same time intellectual, social and political liberty essential to human progress in a wider field." (63)

Foreign examples that British advocates of middle-way planning liked to hold up were to be found only after the mid-1930s when changes in national direction occurred in capitalist countries. In this connection the New Deal policies of President F.D. Roosevelt was especially praised, together with the social democracy of Sweden and the Labour government of New Zealand.

(v) The Influence of the 'Planning' Idea on Government

Outwardly the 'planners' seemed to make little headway in terms of government policy and yet by 1933 the groundwork for a significant shift in attitudes could be detected. The crisis of the 1929-31 period, at home and abroad, had shaken many in the British establishment. The crisis also helped to give greater urgency to the need to do 'something'. That 'something' most logically and forcefully appeared to be greater state intervention and the adoption of mechanisms for managing the economy, albeit partially and with reluctance. Within the private sector the move to larger, more rational, units of production has been noted. This process of rationalisation gave a momentum to allied ideas of state aided rationalisation. Thus the B.B.C. (1922) and the Imperial Airways (1924) both came about through state action as did the creation of the Central Electricity Board (1926). After 1931 some of the most significant examples of the same drift in interventionist policies were the creation of Agricultural Marketing Boards (1933) the nationalisation of London's Passenger Transport Services (1933), the development of a regional policy through the establishment of Regional commissioners in distressed areas (1934), provision of grants in such areas and powers to set up trading estates. Finally the government extended public control in the Airways industry by setting up the British Overseas Airways Corporation (1939) as a public corporation. This list is not exhaustive but it indicates that the ideas against laissez-faire in economic affairs had made considerable headway and that it is within this wider climate of ideas that town planning in the inter-war years must be seen. It was not something isolated from mainstream policy but was linked, both practically and ideologically to a wider demand for a planned approach. That ideological context was



essentially based on the idea of a managed capitalism, rather than a socialist alternative. This view was subscribed to by key thinkers in all the three main parties and laid the basis for compromise between class interests in the post Second World War 'reconstruction'.

The extent to which this broad view of planning was reflected in the ideology of the town planning movement is one of the subjects of the next chapter. This chapter is concerned to explore how the ideas of the town planning movement evolved between 1919 and 1933 and forms a sequence of chapters in Part 4 which seek to identify the objectives for town planning prior to analysing how successfully they were met under the Second Town Planning Act.

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## **PART 4**

### **THE SUCCESS & FAILURE OF TOWN PLANNING 1919-1933**

#### **THE NATIONAL EXPERIENCE**

- \* Chapter 13 Objectives for Town Planning - The Town Planning Movement**
- \* Chapter 14 Objectives for Town Planning - The Political Agenda**
- \* Chapter 15 Statutory Objectives for Town Planning**
- \* Chapter 16 The Success and Failure of Statutory Town Planning, 1919-1933**

## Chapter 13 : Objectives for Town Planning - The Town Planning Movement

This chapter is the first of three which seek to establish the main objectives of statutory town planning in the period 1919 to 1933. The principal Act, the 1919 Housing, Town Planning, Etc., Act, later consolidated into the 1925 Housing, Act and the 1925 Town Planning Act, and other associated legislation, possessed a range of objectives which reflected the agendas of both political forces and the town planning movement. The legislation itself can reveal, through analysis, the main overt objectives contained within it and this is dealt with in Chapter 15. But the town planning movement and political parties sought to achieve a range of ends through town planning, only some of which found expression in the legislation. This chapter and the following one consider, first, those objectives established by the town planning movement, and then, those framed by the main political parties.

However, clarifying objectives is not always easy. There are always open and hidden agendas. The open agenda can be discerned by looking at the legislation and accompanying regulations, at Ministerial statements and those of officials and at the declared professional intent and aspirations. But the hidden agenda has to be inferred by reading between the lines or by studying actions. Hidden agendas, by their very nature, cannot be proved to exist. But they probably act as the main levers on policy decisions. This complication makes assessment of success or failure very problematic. A further complicating feature is that the objectives are not static like a set of blueprints, but flexible according to the altered priorities of Government and those of other actors in the activity who respond to changing circumstances be they economic, financial or political. Finally, whatever objectives, open or hidden, are set at national



level, local factors often played a crucial part in shaping the outcome. Local objectives can be varied and complex and subject to all the comments made regarding national objectives. This Part is concerned primarily with national frameworks and local factors are considered in some detail in the next Part.

The influence of the town planning movement on both the content of statutory town planning and its implementation is clearly considerable. As a special interest movement it was their pressure which helped focus political, and hence Government, attention on the issue of land-use control. Through careful contact, persistent argument and quality of ideas the town planning movement can be seen to have exerted a great deal of influence in obtaining statutory town planning at the time that it was conceded in 1909. However, the view is taken that it was not the decisive factor in securing the longer-term intervention by Government in land-use planning. As the last Part of this study sought to demonstrate there were larger social and economic forces at work which impelled Governments along the path of intervention. The role of the town planning movement was to provide a focus for the problem to be addressed by town planning and to furnish a set of arguments for action to be taken by politicians. Having achieved statutory town planning in 1909 the historic role of the town planning movement had in large measure been achieved. It did, however, continue to function during the post-war period because many of its detailed objectives were not met by legislation. It, therefore, acted, in the period, 1919 to 1933, as a pressure for the extension of town planning controls into areas which, it was argued, would make the practice more effective and efficient. In addition, the movement also sought to mobilise opinion to maintain town planning when it was thought to be under attack. The tone and quality of the town planning movement moved

away from a propagandist and proselytising one, concerned with advocating the need for town planning, to a more practical and professional concern for making the activity more technically proficient.

This chapter is not concerned to present a detailed picture of the operations of each element of the town planning movement in this period. This has been amply covered by Cherry, 1984,<sup>(1)</sup> and Ashworth, 1954.<sup>(2)</sup> Rather, it seeks to identify those key issues which the movement elaborated between 1919 and 1933. The main issues which are dealt with in turn will be; comprehensiveness in the scope of town planning; compensation and betterment; controlling urban growth/new towns; protection of the countryside; and central and regional planning mechanisms. These issues were not necessarily new to the period, nor are they all defunct today. The concluding section of this chapter will examine the developing ideology of professional town planning as revealed in its literature and the stances of leading practitioners. Before embarking on these various sections an outline is presented of the main component parts of the town planning movement. This complements the references made to the town planning movement in Part 2.

#### (i) The Town Planning Movement

Six main components of the town planning movement are identified; the professional institutes; the garden city movement; the conservation movement; the housing and town planning movement; the academic; and significant individuals. These are described as follows:-

(a) The Professional Institutes - The four main professional bodies who maintained a direct interest in town planning during the study period were the Royal Institute of British Architects (R.I.B.A.), The

Surveyors' Institute (S.I.), The Institution of Municipal and County Engineers (I.M.C.E.) and the Town Planning Institute (T.P.I.). In addition mention should be made of the Institute of Civil Engineers (I.C.E.) and the Institute of Landscape Architects (I.L.A.), although the latter was not founded until 1929.

Although small and a relative newcomer the T.P.I. is the most important of these bodies from a town planning point of view. Not only was it the Institute specifically established to represent the town planning interest but its membership, throughout the study period, was drawn largely from the other instiutes. The T.P.I., therefore, reflected the R.I.B.A., the I.M.C.E., and S.I., through its membership. There was, nevertheless, a certain tension between the T.P.I. and the other professions, as the T.P.I. sought to establish its primacy in the area. This was bound to occur in the field of qualification and examinations. During the 1920s the T.P.I. developed its own examinations, and although entry to such examinations was still derived from those with qualifications in the other land professions, it grew increasingly to challenge the examinations in Town Planning held by the R.I.B.A. and the I.M.C.E. In 1932 a Joint Examination Board was established to include the S.I. as well as the R.I.B.A., the I.M.C.E and the T.P.I.<sup>(3)</sup> Membership of the T.P.I. grew slowly from approximately 160 in 1919 to 400 by 1935 <sup>(4)</sup> and the type of member gradually changed,

"by 1939 the town planner had become less of a dedicated reformer and more an officer of local government, either in permanent or temporary capacity." <sup>(5)</sup>

Two other features marked the increase in significance of the T.P.I.



between 1919 and 1933. The first relates to a local presence. In 1922 the T.P.I. formed its first branch, the North of England Division. This was followed in 1930 with the formation of a Scottish Branch. The second concerns the publication of an Institute Journal. Up until 1923 the T.P.I. published its proceedings as Papers and Dsscussions. From November, 1923, a Journal was established with an editor, R. Bruce.

(b) The Garden City Movement - The Garden City Movement continued to be powerfully propagandist throughout the study period. The main organisation was the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association (G.C. & T.P.A.). This was the same organisation founded by E. Howard in 1899 as the Garden City Association. It changed its name in 1907 and remained as the G.C. & T.P.A. until the early 1940s, when it became the Town and Country Planning Association. Its main publication was titled Garden Cities and Town Planning Magazine, although 'Magazine' was dropped from the title in 1921. An International Garden Cities and Town Planning Association was established before the war in 1931, reflecting the growth of the idea overseas. In 1923 this was extended further with the establishment of a Garden Cities Association in Soviet Russia.<sup>(6)</sup> A feature developed during the 1920s was the organisation of Town Planning Tours, by the Association. These concentrated on detailed study of particular areas of England. By the end of the 1920s tours were arranged to Europe.

Another aspect of the Garden City Movement concerned the role of the Garden City Companies, Letchworth Garden City Limited, established in 1902 and Welwyn Garden City Limited, 1920. These two organisations provided a living example of the theory in practice and received a constant stream of visitors. They helped to keep the Garden City idea alive. Wythenshawe, begun in 1928 was also heralded as an important

practical addition to the Garden City ideal but was never acceptable to the fundamentalists within the movement.

After the First World War the more dedicated adherents to Howard's original ideas established a splinter group to the G.C. & T.P.A. called the National Garden Cities Committee.<sup>(7)</sup> This group advocated building a substantial programme of new towns on garden city lines after the war and published the book New Towns After the War, already referred to in Chapter 10.

(c) The Conservation Movement - The Conservation Movement had developed during the nineteenth century as a response to the growing pressure on Britain's rural and architectural heritage from modern development and transport. A number of specific societies begun during that century survived and were active after the First World War, notably: The Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society; The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings; The Society for Checking the Abuse of Public Advertising; The Ancient Monuments Society; and the National Trust. During the mid 1920s a number of conservationists and town planners called for a broader based conservation society and in 1926 the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (C.P.R.E.) was formed. This Council brought together all of the bodies referred to above as well as the T.P.I., R.I.B.A., G.C. & T.P.A., the National Housing and Town Planning Council and the Royal Society of Arts. In addition the Local Authorities Associations, Landowners Societies, the Surveyors' Institution, Land Agents and Estate Agents and Women's Institutes and Rural Community Councils were represented on the Council.<sup>(8)</sup> Such an organisation provided a powerful voice with which to defend the heritage of Britain. Sadly for the conservationists the powers of 'progress' proved even more powerful as the book, Britain and the Beast, indicated in 1938.<sup>(9)</sup> This despite the

fact that by the mid nineteen thirties the C.P.R.E. consisted of forty two constituent bodies of a national character, twenty eight county branches and committees, a hundred and forty affiliated bodies and an increasing individual associate membership.(10)

In addition to the broad front of national conservation organisations parallel groups operated in pursuit of more special interests but often shared certain conservationist aims. Among these might be mentioned the Ramblers' Association, formed out of disparate groups in 1933, the Cyclists' Touring Club and the British Youth Hostels Association, formed in 1930. The Ramblers' groups, in particular were very active in seeking to open up access to the privately owned moors and fells of northern England.

At the local level there were often specific groups established to help protect beauty spots, particular buildings or particular towns. The London Society, for example was an early type of civic society. Architectural preservation groups such as the Georgian Group and the Victorian Society can also be cited as an element of the conservation movement.

(d) The Housing and Town Planning Movement. Generally speaking housing and town planning were addressed by groups as separate issues. But the National Housing and Town Planning Council, (N.H.T.P.C.) was the one important body which sought to campaign for reforms and improvements to both areas. Its particular significance also lay in its ability to engage the participation of local authority councils and local aldermen and councillors. This political 'edge' gave the N.H.T.P.C. a very critical role in helping to establish statutory town planning in the first place and a continuing important role in its defence and extension. There was also an international dimension to



this activity through the work of the International Housing and Town Planning Federation. One other body is worth mentioning in the category and that is the Bournville Village Trust, which was active in propagating improved housing standards within a town planning context. The Public Utility Housing Associations also provided additional weight to the housing and town planning movement.(11)

(e) The Academic. The growth of town planning education provided a further sector to the town planning movement. Although the academic sector was not generally a campaigning arm it nevertheless played an important role through educating increasing numbers of planners and influencing opinion. This latter aspect was achieved through publications, conferences and the sort of contacts with the 'establishment' that Universities were able to achieve.

By 1919 there were two main university centres of Town Planning; Liverpool and London. Liverpool had been endowed through the support of Lord Leverhulme. S.D. Adshead had been the first professor but left before the First World War to become professor in the Department of Town Planning in the Bartlett School of Architecture at University College, London. Patrick Abercrombie took over from Adshead as professor at Liverpool. Attempts were made to establish town planning at the University of Birmingham. Cadbury gave support for an initiative before the First World War which enabled R. Unwin to lecture part-time. Following some discontinuity a further initiative, this time from the Bournville Village Trust, led to a resumption of courses, but not a separate department. In Scotland courses were also offered for a one-year Diploma at the Edinburgh College of Art, from 1925. Two more courses were added just after the study period, in 1934, at Newcastle and Leeds.(12)

The principal academic town planning publication was the Town Planning Review, which was produced by the Department of Civic Design at Liverpool under the editorship of Patrick Abercrombie from 1910 until he left in 1935.

(f) Significant Individuals. The significant individuals in the town planning movement cover two main categories. There are the seers, to borrow an expression from Professor Hall,<sup>(13)</sup> and the outstanding practitioners. The seers are those who provide important new ideas that shape and influence the way town planning is perceived, largely through the development of original ideas. The two principal characters who fit such a description and were active during the study period are Ebenezer Howard and Patrick Geddes. Howard's main work had been completed before the First World War<sup>(14)</sup> but he continued to espouse his ideas until his death in 1928. Patrick Geddes died four years after Howard and like him had published his most important works on town planning before the First World War. However, unlike Howard, he was a prolific writer and published many articles and papers in the nineteen twenties.<sup>(15)</sup> His holistic message on the nature of town planning, the need for careful survey before preparing plans were, in their way, as influential to the practice of town planning as Howard's message for reducing overcrowding through building satellite towns on garden city lines.

The important practitioners of the period, who also contributed important reinforcing ideas, can be cited as Raymond Unwin, Patrick Abercrombie, Frederick Osborn and Thomas Adams. Each of these gave their talents to the town planning movement through both practical example and effective propaganda. To these should be added George Pepler, who was probably the single most important figure during the study period. Through his position as Chief Town Planner at the

Ministry of Health and his secretaryship of the Town Planning Institute he helped to influence both central and local government town planning practice and professional approaches. He was tireless and effective in his espousal of practical town planning.

## (ii) Comprehensiveness

The issue of comprehensiveness in town planning refers in this context to the need for statutory town planning to apply to all land.

Initially, in the 1920s, the prime demand of the town planning movement was for control of all urban land. The partial application of town planning to the peripheral areas of towns and cities had to some extent arisen because of the promotion, by the early town planning movement, of the example of Germany. Germany had pioneered statutory control of town extensions and it was this idea of existing 'good practice' which was presented strongly to the 1906 Liberal Government.

Throughout the 1920s there was constant reference in town planning literature to the desirability of extending legislation to all built-up areas. The practitioner recognised that there was a need to plan for the whole town, partly because there were pressing problems to be addressed in the inner areas and partly because of the close relationship of suburbs to the main settlements. The ideas of Geddes helped to support such a position in that he had, among other things, stressed the need to understand the way settlements functioned in their regional settings.

The Unhealthy Areas Committee, chaired by Neville Chamberlain raised the question of the problems of overcrowding and congestion in the built-up areas. The Final Report of the Committee in 1921<sup>(16)</sup> prompted Abercrombie to remark.



"...there would be no solution unless the whole region was studied and planned for as a whole, both in order that the sites of the slum areas, when cleared, should be devoted to their proper function in the general life of the community, and so that they should not be reconstructed in such a way as to make more difficult the ultimate carrying-out of any required improvement of internal communications." (17)

The issue of extending statutory town planning and making all town planning compulsory was raised by a member of the Town Planning Institute in 1923. In a paper printed in the Institute's Journal, John Rosevear argued that statutory town planning powers were "very narrow" and pointed out that compulsory planning only applied to 4 per cent of the area of England and Wales. He called for compulsory town planning to be applied to all County and Municipal Boroughs and Urban Districts, irrespective of size and population and applicable to both developed and undeveloped areas. He also argued for the compulsory planning of all rural areas so far as main roads and the areas about them were concerned.(18)

W.T. Lancashire, probably spoke for the profession when he asserted in his Presidential Address to the Town Planning Institute in 1924,

"We are not yet enabled by Parliament, as I believe most of us think we ought to be, to plan on sufficiently adequate lines for the re-building or re-laying out of our built-up areas,..." (19)

In the later 1920s and early 1930s the ideal of comprehensive town planning increasingly embraced rural areas as well as the urban. The work of the conservation movement and the increasing encroachment of development and motor traffic into rural beauty spots highlighted the need for land-use controls to be extended. When the Labour Government

announced in 1930 its intention to introduce the modification and extension of town planning law and to preserve rural amenities there was a wide welcome from the town planning movement. Ewart Culpin, writing as Editor of the Journal of the Town Planning Institute, wrote,

"The two matters of primary importance appear to be:- First, to remove any limitations to the type of land to which a scheme can be applied, so that, on the one hand, far sighted schemes may be prepared to adjust our towns to meet the strain of modern conditions of traffic, etc., and, on the other, widespread schemes of rural preservation may be embarked upon." (20)

The second issue concerned compensation and betterment, but it is illuminating that the comprehensive issue was cited first. The new Town and Country Planning Act, 1932, did in fact appear to meet this crucial demand of the town planning movement. How far it succeeded is not within the remit of this study but a major weakness of earlier legislation had been addressed, by extending town planning to all land.

None of the key issues developed in this chapter can be neatly compartmentalised. The issue of the need for comprehensive legislation was also relevant to the desire to conserve Britain's heritage and also related to calls for central and regional planning mechanisms.

### (iii) Compensation & Betterment

As Culpin had written in 1930, compensation and betterment was also a matter of primary importance for any new legislation on town planning to revise. As he pointed out,

"Unless such a revision is made, essential schemes of replanning and preservation are doomed to failure. In the main, such

schemes enhance total values and therefore it is necessary that a method of adjustment should be devised by which values are in effect pooled and redistributed and that. where it is merely a question of redistribution of value, the public purse shall not be raided." (21)

The need to redress the balance between the public and private interest in compensation and betterment united the whole of the town planning movement by 1930. It was seen to be crucial if local amenities, improvements to roads, preservation of open spaces and the prevention of ribbon development were to be successful. If there was one single factor undermining the ability of statutory town planning to secure such improvements it was the fear of local authorities having to pay high compensation with little likelihood of receiving betterment.

The strength of feeling on the issue does not appear to gather strength within the professional wing of the movement until the late 1920s and early 1930s. This is largely because the early years were mostly taken up with preparing the first stages of town planning schemes. Gradually experience accumulated about the problems authorities faced in trying to change existing land-uses, widen narrow streets or prevent ribbon development.

The early response of professional town planners to the question of compensation appeared to accept that it was fair and reasonable. At the Oxford Conference on post-war town planning held in 1919 the discussion went as follows:

"Mr. Abbott further said it must not be forgotten that with reasonable owners they could probably agree that there should be no compensation. At Ruislip they fixed the building line for 30 miles of road without compensation except in this one case. Mr.



R.A. Reay-Nadin (Vice Chairman) thought that in equity in the case the owner was probably entitled to compensation." (22)

Between 1919 and 1930 compensation and betterment rarely surfaced as a separate issue in the Journal of the Town Planning Institute, the Town Planning Review, Garden Cities and Town Planning, or the various books published by prominent town planners. But as Culpin revealed in his 1930 editorial in the Journal of the Town Planning Institute, it was a priority issue. Barry Parker, President of the Town Planning Institute in 1929-30 devoted much of his Presidential address to the question, calling in particular for improved methods of recovering betterment.(23) Betterment had been fixed at 50 per cent under the 1919 Act and proved very difficult to recover. Usually it was only a factor when a local authority acquired land that was in dispute. Upon re-sale the local authority could re-coup any enhanced value due to its own town planning proposal. The new 1932 Act eventually settled for increasing betterment to 75 per cent but made no improvements to aiding its recovery.

The issue of compensation and betterment, primarily a hidden current of concern between 1919 and 1933 received a higher profile after the 1932 Town and Country Planning Act and eventually received attention during the war through the Uthwatt Committee.(24)

#### (iv) Controlling Growth/New Towns

Most town planners held it as axiomatic that the uncontrolled spread of towns and cities was not a good thing. Many supported the idea of building garden cities as a method of dealing with existing overcrowding in cities and coping with new urban growth. The necessity for a green belt to restrict growth was also accepted as a necessary corollary of these ideas. It was perhaps ironic that most practising

town planners were active in supporting and planning for suburban growth. This dichotomy between thought and action was partly due to the limited role that Governments were prepared to give to land-use control. The garden city model required a considerable extension of state powers and machinery. But the professional wing of the movement, by advocating town extension planning - even as a first step - helped to blunt the more radical message.

The Garden City movement was the most consistent advocate for controlling growth and building new towns. We have already noted the call for 100 new towns to be built after the First World War and the practical step of building Letchworth and Welwyn. Pressure on sympathetic Ministers led to further legislative attempts to enable more Garden Cities to be built. Following the positive recommendations for Garden Cities as a solution to overcrowding and slum dwellings in the Report of the Unhealthy Areas Committee in 1921, Chamberlain attempted to pursue the matter in the Housing Act 1921. This Act gave local authorities the power to acquire land for building Garden Cities. This provision was consolidated into the Town Planning Act 1925. As a national policy the powers were ineffective, lacking major financial provisions. But loans were available, and this proved of some assistance to Welwyn Garden City.

In 1931 the Labour Government established a Departmental Committee on Garden Cities and Satellite Towns, chaired by Lord Marley.<sup>(25)</sup> Marley's recommendations were far reaching, but received at a time of retrenchment. The ideas put forward by Marley were later echoed in the Barlow Report.<sup>(26)</sup>

The use of a green belt to prevent urban sprawl was not widely achieved during the study period. Surrey County Council made some strides with



their own Act of Parliament in 1931.(27) The revival of the Greater London Regional Planning Committee after 1932 led to the commencement of the London Green Belt, following a recommendation made in the Second Report in 1933.(28) But, once again, such a policy had to await further changes in attitude and legislation before it became more widely adopted.

(v) Protection of the Countryside

The conservation movement was clearly to the fore on this issue. The formation of the C.P.R.E. in 1926 helped to highlight the problems facing the countryside. The Town Planning Review, under the editorship of Professor Abercrombie, was a major voice on rural planning matters throughout the period. In 1926 Abercrombie devoted a whole issue of the T.P.R. to an analysis of rural England and put forward several suggestions. He concluded his article by saying:

"What then are the conclusions at which we are arrived? That this rural England of ours is at the moment menaced with a more sudden and thorough change than every before owing to a variety of reasons: that it is not safe to leave these changes to adjust themselves, hoping that somehow a general harmony will result from individualistic satisfactions: that it should be possible for a just balance to be struck between conservation and development: that certain parts must be preserved intact and inviolate but that others can, after suffering a change, bring forth something new but beautiful, provided a conscious effort is made: that many and various legal powers exist, but not exactly shaped to the instrument required: that a co-operation of Statutory Authorities, Voluntary Bodies and the General Public is necessary for effective action: that education all



round is wanted - in Landscape Design, in appreciation of the Country and in a detailed Survey of its features. The programme is not a light one." (29)

Abercrombie made many suggestions in the course of his article. He did not call for a great many new controls, believing that if Local Authorities used existing powers wisely and widely most offences could be contained. He did however, call for County Council powers to engage in statutory town planning and to extend such powers to rural areas. He also called for setting up National Parks and making Forestry Commission areas accessible. His suggestion for a Council to bring together local authorities, voluntary bodies and members of the public bore immediate fruit and led to the setting up of the C.P.R.E..

There was a growing concern over the need to protect the countryside as the pressures identified by Abercrombie; rural development, urban growth and motor traffic, increased. Hopes for greater powers and more Government support rose when in 1930 Sir Edward Hilton-Young, a Conservative M.P., introduced a Private Members Bill to Parliament, called the Rural Amenities Bill, designed to extend planning powers to rural areas. It received a wide measure of support but was superseded by Arthur Greenwood's Town and Country Planning Bill, which in turn fell with the fall of the Labour Government in 1931.

The idea for designating National Parks had arisen in America and Canada. A growing opinion to develop the idea in this country eventually led to the second Labour Government setting up a Committee of Inquiry into the feasibility of establishing National Parks in Great Britain. Its Chairman was Christopher Addison and it reported in 1931.(30) The Report did not recommend the establishment of National Parks but it did accept the argument for preserving areas of

outstanding beauty. It proposed extending existing town planning powers and establishing a National Authority with funds to aid protection. Like most of the other main demands of the town planning movement, the final realisation of National Parks had to await wider changes in Government attitudes.

(vi) Central & Regional Planning

The subject of regional planning was regularly discussed in all parts of the town planning movement during the study period. By regional planning, the movement generally meant co-operation and joint planning between adjacent local authorities. The potential fragmentation of town planning among the 1700, or so, local authorities was a fear and both the Ministry of Health's Town Planning Division and the town planning movement were constant in their reiteration of the need for local authorities to link up into Joint Town Planning Committees. All of the town planning journals carried regular features and reviews of the reports of Joint Town Planning Committees and the Regional Advisory Plans drawn up by town planning consultants. In 1932 the Town Planning Review decided to publish reviews of Regional Reports in groups, each of which would deal with a single large geographical unit. In a foreword to this series, P.M. Roxby wrote:

"Regional Planning should ultimately be something far more comprehensive than a mere outgrowth or expansion of Town Planning, however natural it may be for it to originate in that way... It should be possible for the outlines of a national policy, conceived on broad geographical lines, gradually to take shape without destroying the local and voluntary character of the movement which has undoubtedly been a source of strength hitherto." (31)

Two years earlier in 1930 W.H.McLean in his book, Regional and Town Planning had pointed to the logical necessity for local, regional, national and international planning.(32) But by and large the town planning movement did not develop clear demands for either a national or regional town planning policy for Central Government. R. Unwin argued in 1931 for the creation of Regional Planning Authorities which would implement Regional Plans but he was not supported by Pepler and other leading figures in the Town Planning Institute.(33)

In 1931 the second Labour Government set up yet another Departmental Committee, this time to investigate Regional Development. Lord Chelmsford chaired the Committee which was charged with considering all the Regional Reports produced to that date and recommending future action. The Committee was cut short in its deliberations by the fall of the Government. An Interim Report, however, failed to see the need for any new national or regional mechanisms.(34)

The mood on national mechanisms for planning was altered during the 1931/32 crisis. Town planners were influenced by the wider debate on planning which made frequent calls for effective machinery for national planning at Cabinet and Whitehall level. In 1932, in his Presidential address to the Town Planning Institute, Mr. F. Longstreth Thompson called for a "National Planning Board", made up of representatives of Town Planning, Industry and Transport. Mr. Thompson suggested that it would be the duty of the Board to collect and examine all available data, to investigate the problems to be solved, and to formulate a national planning policy that could be adapted to local needs.(35) C.B. Purdom, writing in support of Longstreth Thompson, went further and suggested that the National Planning Board should be capable of carrying schemes into effect.(36) This suggestion worried the Journal of the Town Planning Institute,



"All will agree that national team work in thought and deed is a crying need of the moment; but it would be fatal if this were made an excuse for any potential members of the team to slacken their efforts in advancing regional or local planning schemes. We are not yet fully regionally minded. Let us not miss seeing the trees because we are in search of a wood." (37)

This concludes the brief survey of key issues which concerned the town planning movement between 1919 and 1933. Clearly many of these concerns were long term issues which went beyond the legislation existing at this time. In this sense they were generally not objectives which the statutory provisions between 1919 and 1932 directly addressed and should not be so judged. It would be appropriate to examine the third Town Planning Act of 1932 to see how far the movement's key issues were adopted but that is not within the scope of this study. The purpose of this survey has been to show the direct contextual framework within which the statutory town planning legislation of 1919-1933 sat and to show how much wider were the concerns of the movement. It also indicates how pressures were exerted on the 1919 Act and associated legislation to meet an ever wider set of town planning objectives. The next and concluding section indicates the professions primary ideological stance on the scope and purpose of statutory town planning at the commencement of the second Town Planning Act.

### (iii) Professional Objectives for Town Planning

Foley (1960) identified three ideologies of British Town planning which he saw as "complementary, competitive and in some measure, even conflicting". (38) Stated simply, Foley's ideologies were; town planning as umpire reconciling competing claims on land-use without

pre-conceptions; town planning as improving the physical environment according to vague notions of promoting a healthy and civilised life; and town planning as part of a wider social programme designed to secure low-density living, good local community life and the restriction of the growth of large conurbations. It is interesting that Foley doesn't raise the implicit political values of these positions. If he did he could perhaps see that they can all be aspects of the same legitimising ideology, as indeed they were. Whilst it is true that tensions could and did arise between Foley's three variations they more generally tended to be self reinforcing. The view is put forward here that the dominant professional objectives for town planning (which could be said to represent its ideology) were just those set out by Foley wrapped up as a package. They constituted the notion that town planning was concerned with promoting efficiency. Reconciling competing land-use claims, improving the physical environment and advancing specific solutions were all put forward primarily as the means of achieving greater efficiency in national life. In retrospect, it can be seen that the political question of, 'for whom efficiency was being sought', was either sidetracked by answering, 'for everyone', or, if posed in terms of, 'who will benefit', 'who will lose', ignored. Given the failure to address the nature of society and the place of power in it, town planners were bound to tacitly support the existing social system.

An ideology is seen here as a set of values designed to legitimise activity.<sup>(39)</sup> Since it is politically unacceptable in a representative democracy to be seen to favour, in the main, a narrow and powerful set of interests, then it is necessary to present programmes and policies, such as town planning, behind notions of neutrality, generalised benefits and greater efficiency. Before becoming a state-led activity



town planning could and did assume a wider range of ideologies. A powerful notion of town planning as an instrument of social reform benefitting the mass of the people was widely espoused by the town planning movement.<sup>(40)</sup> These notions lingered on within the profession and received a boost after the First World War in the climate of social change. It was possible, for a brief period, to see town planning as part of a wider social programme of change in favour of greater power for working people. That power could be expressed in economic and political terms, complemented by an improved physical environment. Within the town planning profession the Garden City movement continued to represent the most radical set of values in the 1920s. But it would be wrong to overstate the extent of that radicalism. Indeed it is possible to place the garden city notion alongside the other planning nostrums such as low density and controlling city growth as part of the 'planning as efficiency' package. Howard's vision of garden cities as part of a social reform programme had been gradually lost in the course of the twentieth century.

The main source of ascertaining the professional town planning attitude during this study period lie in Journals already referred to, namely the Journal of the Town Planning Institute, the Town Planning Review and Garden Cities and Town Planning. Articles also appeared in a range of other papers and journals. Books written by professional planners in the study period also throw light on professional attitudes. The first to appear after the war were T.H. Hughes and E.A.G. Lamborn's "Towns and Town Planning Ancient and Modern" <sup>(41)</sup> and S.D. Adshead's "Town Planning and Town Development", <sup>(42)</sup> both of which were published in 1923. In 1925 H.V. Lanchester, published "The Art of Town Planning" <sup>(43)</sup> and C.B. Purdom, "The Building of Satellite Towns".<sup>(44)</sup> These were the main books on town planning published in the 1920s,



although mention should be made of R. Unwin's, "Town Planning in Practice", which had editions published in 1919, 1920 and 1932.

Between 1930 and 1933 there were three further town planning texts published. In 1930, W.H. McLean published "Regional and Town Planning",<sup>(45)</sup> in 1932, T. Adams wrote "Recent Advances in Town Planning" <sup>(46)</sup> and in 1933, P. Abercrombie published "Town and Country Planning".<sup>(47)</sup>

Within this body of literature and the many articles in the journals two currents are discernable, town planning as art and town planning as a technique. The view that the object of town planning was to create beauty was a feature that runs through all the books except McLean's. One reason for this may lie in the backgrounds of the authors. All were architects, except McLean, who was an Engineer. The technical aspects of planning tend to dominate the contributions in the Journal of the Town Planning Institute. The art and beauty theme was powerful in the Town Planning Review and Garden Cities and Town Planning contained a fusion of the two. In fact, there need be no real tension between the notion of creating beauty and undertaking a technically proficient job. They represent different starting points and traditions but could be seen as complementary. Both fitted into a non-political, value-free definition of town planning that held sway throughout the period, reinforcing the statutory and political objectives laid down for town planning. The one author who put, more clearly than most, the professional objectives of town planners in this period, fusing the art and technical approaches, was Thomas Mawson. Writing in Bibby's Annual in 1920, Mawson developed his theme under the title, "National Efficiency and Town Planning". Mawson was one of the few to attempt a rounded definition of efficiency. He wrote,

"...there is a great danger of a rapid loss of physical

efficiency, which will react strongly upon the success of the city and the country. Capital is merely labour crystallised, and the wealth and material efficiency of a nation depends upon the capacity for work possessed by its individual citizens; therefore, one of the great essentials in national and civic efficiency is the physical well being of each individual.

Again, to be thoroughly efficient, a nation must stand well in the world's market, and be able not only to supply well-made goods, but to supply them at competitive prices. The increased efficiency of the worker would be one factor in producing this result; but in addition, the factories must be so placed and designed that the goods can be shipped to the various markets with as little delay, and as small an amount of handling and transshipments as possible. This can only be accomplished by a very careful study of the physical details of the city, and a proper policy of improvement.

The third factor in producing efficiency in the city and country is one which, up to now, has been neglected. I mean an increased power to perceive the beautiful in wild nature and human nature. It is possible to live with the crude and the brutal until it almost become an ideal. The most perfect corrective to this is to bring humanity into contact with the beautiful...we must bring more natural beauty into the lives of our city dwellers..." (48)

Thomas Mawson became President of the Town Planning Institute in 1923. Nearly ten years later in 1932, his successor as President, Mr. Longstreth Thompson in conducting a review of the fortunes of the new town planning legislation declared,

"It is the regrettable fact that, notwithstanding the many good results obtained through its agency, town planning has not yet succeeded in establishing itself in the minds of the great bulk of the people, nor, which is of much greater importance, in the minds of the industrial and business community, as an absolute vital factor in the health and comfort of their everyday life and in the efficiency and prosperity of their commercial undertakings." (49)

The ideological stance of professional town planners proved to be a consistent and long-lasting one and its general acceptance within the scope and objects of town planning legislation will be discussed in Chapter 15. The next chapter seeks to establish the broad political objectives for town planning.

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## Chapter 14 : Objectives for Town Planning - The Political Agenda

Having considered the objectives of town planning from the perspective of the town planning movement, it is appropriate to turn now to the political arena. Statutory town planning is ostensibly framed by the Government of the day and passed or modified by the Houses of Parliament comprising all political parties. The position of political parties on town planning would, therefore, appear to be crucial to the eventual outcome. Policy making is, of course, never that clear-cut in a society in which economic power largely resides outside Parliament and in which powerful interest movements can exert a special influence. But the views of the political parties and their leaders will themselves reflect these wider power bases.

The political objectives for town planning are seen to be revealed in Ministerial statements, speeches or articles and in similar material by the officials of the relevant central Government Ministry, mainly the Ministry of Health. This material is especially prone to both open and hidden objectives and alters according to contextual factors. Where Local Authority organisations offer nationally relevant views then here too is a source of political objectives. In addition the views of opposition parties also offer a useful insight into the political temper of the day concerning town planning.

### Ministers Responsible for Town Planning

The Minister with the most responsibility for town planning was the Minister of Health. Between 1919 and 1933 there were eight incumbents and of these, one, Neville Chamberlain, held the post on three separate occasions. Indeed Chamberlain was the politician with the most connection with town planning. His local government background in Birmingham before the First World War illustrated his particular

concern for the issues of town planning, housing and health. He held the post of Chairman of Birmingham's Town Planning Committee and helped to make that City a pioneer in undertaking statutory town planning schemes.<sup>(1)</sup> He became a founder, Honorary Member, of the Town Planning Institute in 1914. Chamberlain, therefore, is unique among Ministers of Health in this period in having a background steeped in local government and having been a keen advocate and participant in statutory town planning from the very outset. Of the other Ministers Christopher Addison is important in that he piloted the second Town Planning Act through Parliament in 1919 as a Liberal (he later joined the Labour Party and became Minister of Agriculture in 1929). Sir E. Hilton Young also occupied the post at a very important time, during the 1931 to 1933 period, when the Town and Country Planning Act, 1932, was being debated. Hilton Young had earlier demonstrated his commitment to environmental issues, as noted in the last chapter, when he introduced a private members' Bill, the Rural Amenities Bill, in 1930, on behalf of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England. This was later superseded by the introduction in 1931 of Arthur Greenwood's Town and Country Planning Bill which sank with the Labour Government in August, 1931. In the subsequent government Hilton Young became Minister of Health and sought to re-introduce Greenwood's fallen Bill. The 1931 House of Commons was very hostile to town planning and Hilton Young was forced to accept a number of compromises. It is possible that with a less sympathetic Minister more might have been lost at this stage.

### Social Reform & Social Engineering

Statements by the Minister of Health can provide some insights into the political intent of governments regarding town planning. But caution is required in interpreting this material. Politicians rarely state clearly what their intentions are and particularly tend to conceal the

hidden agendas. But in 1919 in the somewhat charged atmosphere of the House of Commons at that time, the then Minister of Health, C. Addison, revealed quite clearly the joint objectives of the Housing Town Planning, Etc., Bill.

"...this matter is of the utmost importance, from the point of view not only of the physical well-being of our people, but of our social stability and industrial content." (2)

Whilst it is true that this statement referred primarily to the housing content of the Bill the town planning aspects were seen as an integral aspect of housing and so the issues were closely bound up together. For Addison, then, as with the Coalition generally, the political objectives of town planning at this stage were clearly both to do with social reform and social engineering. The appalling shortage of housing, as well as the dreadful legacy of Victorian slum dwellings required new, drastic intervention by the state. The people deserved better and had been promised it by Lloyd George during the election. At the same time fears of social revolution were never far below the surface and it was believed by many Conservatives and Liberals, and no doubt traditional Labour leaders too, that providing decent housing to working people would head-off any potential threat in that direction. Mr. Pemberton Billing M.P. expressed precisely this view during the debate over the Bill saying that a personal stake in a house would prevent anyone from becoming a 'Bolshevik'. (3)

The twin objectives of social reform and social engineering can also be expressed in terms of seeking a 'New Britain' or an 'Efficient Britain'. This duality was certainly present in the thinking behind the introduction of social legislation, such as town planning, and was part of the Coalition's political package. But it is important to bear



in mind that the support of Conservatives, such as Pemberton Billing, was primarily to prevent a worse evil. Reform was conceded as necessary by Conservatives because it undermined those who sought to reconstruct society along radically different lines. In practice the much used word of 1917 to 1921 'Reconstruction', meant different things to all the political parties. In effect, there were three main interpretations of 'Reconstruction' which can just as aptly be ascribed to town planning.

### Political Objectives for Town Planning

These three legitimations of town planning did not necessarily represent three separate party lines but at their core each fell more naturally within established party doctrine than into any other. These three political objectives of town planning were:

- (i) to use town planning as an instrument of social reform, primarily in association with the introduction of new and better housing for the working class,
- (ii) to use town planning as a means of enhancing the economic and social efficiency of the country in a more humane and competitive British capitalist system, and
- (iii) to use town planning along with other social reforms to head-off threats of social revolution which might lead to the overthrow of the capitalist system and its replacement by a socialist one.

These three aims can be seen to operate at the political level throughout the period 1919 to 1933, although the third of the objectives only received a clear manifestation in the 1919 to 1921 period when some politicians perceived social revolution as a real

threat. In the main, the dominant tension at both political and professional level was between the first two objectives, although even here the emergence after 1921 of the 'town planning for efficiency' theme as the over-riding objective is apparent.

The position of the three main political parties on these objectives alters throughout the period. In 1919 it is possible to assert that Labour was primarily behind objective (i), the Coalition Liberals of Lloyd George behind objective (ii) and the Conservative Party supported objective (iii). This is a crude assessment which reflects the dominant mood and the way that mood was expressed in programme terms and in speeches.

### The Labour Party & Town Planning

For the Labour Party the outward political position was reformist, but it was not a well thought through reformism. Much of the emotional content of the Party's position was still rooted in a desire to see a totally new form of society and this led to a resistance to get involved with tinkering with the 'bosses system'. This explains the refusal of Labour to get involved in the wartime Reconstruction Committee of Lloyd George and Addison. Their 1919 Election Manifesto was based on the newly adopted programme, written for them by Sidney Webb, 'Labour and the New Social Order', which contained far reaching reforms that if implemented would have transformed society. Town planning was not a key issue for any political party and was not expressly mentioned in Labour's 1918 Programme. The approach to reforms though, leads to the conclusion that town planning would have been part of substantial reconstruction of society and not merely an aspect of ameliorating the system. But, by inclination and, perhaps a deeper philosophy, the leaders of the Labour Party were not

revolutionaries nor prepared to make any substantial challenge to the status quo, as the experience of both the 1924 and 1929-31 minority Labour Governments confirmed. The 'New Social Order' was seen as a distinct goal. The reality of power was that few reforms could be implemented but there was little evidence in the posture, style and stance of the Labour leaders in either period of government that a radical alternative really appealed to them. The more persuasive and subtle message of the second objective, therefore, came to play a larger and larger role in the objectives of the Labour Party. Labour's 1918 Programme remained as a statement of Labour's commitment, but successive Election Manifestos more closely reflected their more limited aspirations.

#### The Liberal Party & Town Planning

The Liberal Party's stance on the objectives was ambiguous. Both the reformist and the efficiency model was adopted. But since the Liberals never stood for the overthrow of the capitalist system, objective (ii) provided the dominant force in their thinking. This became much clearer during the middle 1920s and was to remain central to their thinking thereafter. A series of policy documents established the Liberal Party as the first social-democratic party in this country.<sup>(4)</sup> But their failure to achieve office meant that their ideas were never tested.

#### The Conservative Party & Town Planning

The Conservative Party also held contradictory positions. Naturally it rejected reformism in terms of seeking to transform society but since it was a pragmatic party it adopted reforms when appropriate. In 1919 as partners in the Lloyd George Coalition they bore joint responsibility for the far reaching social programmes put forward and



implemented, including the extension of town planning. Their prime motivation at this time must have been to prevent social disquiet, i.e. objective (iii). But after 1922, with their assumption of power after jettisoning the Liberals and winning a general election in their own right, their overt stand was anti-reform and a return to pre-war conditions. As we have seen, the reality was very different and the broad trend to objective (ii) of seeking to manage and improve capitalism were paramount.

The distinction to be drawn between the way the three parties each interpreted the 'efficiency' objective may be seen as follows; the Liberal Party stood most enthusiastically for this path and developed the most advanced and adventurous policies to pursue it; the Labour Party moved to the position due to their inability to undertake their maximum programme; and the Tories took up the position by default because their real desire was untenable. For progressive Conservatives there were opportunities to drive through improvements in social provisions as wider trends in industrial organisation asserted themselves and were taken 'on board' by successive Conservative Governments.

### Political Parties & the Garden City concept

Attitudes between the political parties towards the Garden City concept illustrate these differences. All parties were represented on the Executive Committee of the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association during the 1920s. In 1924 the President was Cecil Harmsworth, a Liberal; the Chairman of the Council, Col.F.E. Freemantle, M.P., was a Conservative; and the Chairman of the Executive was R.L. Reiss, a member of the Labour Party. Other Labour members on the Council at this time were W. Graham, M.P., and G.D.H. Cole. But only the Labour

Party had officially declared itself to be in favour of a Garden City policy. This had been adopted at the 1918 Annual Conference. The London Labour Party, under the Chairmanship of Herbert Morrison had also officially adopted support of the Garden City principle as had those London Boroughs under Labour leadership.(5)

In fact, Herbert Morrison was a steady advocate of Garden Cities during the early 1920s.(6) The Liberal Party's position was not so strong, but many prominent Liberals associated themselves with the Garden City idea. A. Williams, who was a Liberal M.P. for many years, became Chairman of the first Garden City Limited at Letchworth. But when the Liberals published their detailed policy documents in 1925, 'The Land and the Nation' and 'Town and the Land', there was no mention of Garden Cities or satellite towns, although there was a section on town planning which proposed extending obligatory town planning powers for all built-in areas where problems of congestion and the like existed. However, by 1928 the policy altered and Garden Cities were advocated in the Liberal's 'Yellow Book'.(7) On the Conservative side the contrast between individual commitment and government delivery was a consistent feature. Neville Chamberlain was clearly the most committed Conservative to the idea of town planning and saw this in the context of making capitalism more efficient. As Minister of Health he managed a limited number of advances but failed to make substantial changes. As already noted, it was Chamberlain who chaired the 'Unhealthy Areas Committee' which accepted the Garden City principle and led to certain legislative changes in favour of Garden Cities in the '1921 Housing Act'. But these measures were inadequate and never utilised by the Ministry of Health to stimulate Garden City development. Neither Chamberlain nor Joynson-Hicks, another Conservative Minister of Health who declared himself to be an enthusiastic supporter of Garden Cities, were able to



use their office or the legislation that they instituted, to secure what they professed to believe in.

### Ministerial Statements

One way of studying further the political objectives of town planning is by reference to the official statements of the Minister on the subject. Since such statements are almost invariably the work of the Civil Service within the Ministry, in this case the Ministry of Health, the messages that arise from these statements may reflect the more subtle nuances of Whitehall than as those of the Minister. Circulars are an important source of supplementary intent once a piece of legislation has been passed. They reflect the changing priorities of Government regarding an Act of Parliament and also the feelings of the Ministry staff. In the case of town planning, there were a number of professional town planners and Town Planning Institute members who held key positions within the Ministry of Health. George Pepler as the Chief Planning Inspector was in a pivotal position to influence the way local authorities reacted to town planning since he had a peripatetic role through the country. Perhaps more influential in policy terms was I.G. Gibson, who as Assistant Secretary, drafted most of the relevant town planning circulars during the study period.

The first post-war circular issued on town planning came in March, 1921, as an accompaniment to the Town Planning Procedure Regulations.

Circular 145 reiterated the original intentions of the 1919 Act to simplify the preparation of town planning schemes and also to avoid the 'sterilisation' of land during the time that a scheme was being prepared.<sup>(8)</sup> The circular reflected the altered political objectives that had been introduced as a result of the 1921 financial crisis and makes no mention of the benefits of town planning to ordinary people.



Efficiency has replaced social idealism almost completely as this passage illustrates.

"Now less than ever can we afford the waste which has been the result of the haphazard growth of towns in the past; and therefore, in conformity with the measures which are now being taken for economy, wise action is necessary as regards town planning. For industry, even more than for housing, the gains of proper town planning are great, by locating factories, workshops, and businesses in the places best adapted for them and providing betimes for proper roads and other communications, and thus avoiding the later necessity of costly street improvements." (9)

This was not a new message for town planners to espouse. Much of the argument for town planning during the early part of the twentieth century was couched in this language. It is tempting to believe that the emphasis of such lines of argument were determined by a clever appraisal of what was most likely to find favour in a hostile world. In other words since most Conservative politicians and the dominant class interests of industry, finance and commerce were ideologically opposed to town planning as social reform, then it had to be sold as an element of improving the performance of capitalism. Arguably to have taken any different line would have failed to get town planning onto the statute books and in the retrenched climate of 1921 town planning may have fallen victim to the policy changes and expenditure cuts known as the Geddes 'axe'.<sup>(10)</sup> On the other hand it is pertinent to recall that for most professional town planners and other allied professionals, social ideas were not paramount. Apart from a few who held strong socialist or quasi-socialist views, such as Reiss and Unwin, the main preoccupation was a technical one. Town planning for them was a non-

political issue and therefore, the need to emphasise the 'town planning as efficiency' point of view was not a strategem but a strongly held ideological standpoint. The town planning officials within the Ministry of Health also subscribed to the 'town planning as efficiency' view and thus the political and the professional world were able to co-join very easily after the jettisoning of the post-war 'reconstruction for heroes' phase in 1921.

### Town Planning & Industry

It is interesting to note that one of the strong themes in promoting town planning in 1919 had been its close relationship to housing. But by 1920 industry had been elevated to prime place in validating town planning. The Ministry of Health's agenda appears to have been to try and use town planning as a facilitator of industrial regeneration and growth, particularly, in the first instance, in the coalfields.<sup>(11)</sup> Whilst this was not stated with clarity one can see this position expressed most clearly by George Pepler in his addresses to Joint Town Planning Committees up and down the country and in his occasional papers to the Town Planning Institute.<sup>(12)</sup> The primacy of industry was present in Circular 145 as quoted above and was again noticeable in a Ministry Statement issued in August, 1921, on the need to consult local interests, thus,

"The purpose of Town Planning is, by wise forethought, to make provision for the future so that towns may develop in such a way that the best possible facilities are available for industry, and the most health and convenient quarters for residence." <sup>(13)</sup>

In outlining the need for wide consultation the main interests mentioned were those connected with industry and business, despite the rhetoric of town planning being a matter for 'the people'.

"Town planning is pre-eminently as matter which concerns the people themselves. Particular classes of the community will be vitally concerned in the effect of a scheme on their special interests - owners and occupiers of land and premises, as regards the value and use of land, and the incidence of the cost of road constructions; businessmen, in the proper recognition of the claims of business and industry and their future progress; architectural and similar societies, in the preservation and promotion of the amenities of the district." (14)

The Minister of Health at the time that this Statement was issued was Sir Alfred Mond, one of the leading industrialists of the day. The theme was more powerfully put in 1932 by Dr. I.G. Gibbon, Assistant Secretary at the Ministry of Health,

"They all knew that the planning movement in this country started with housing and with amenities. This latter was due partly to the personal predilections of those responsible for the movement and partly was an inevitable adjunct of the movement for better housing... All measures were conditioned by the prevailing circumstances. They did not legislate in a vacuum. But they were all now quite aware that, if they were to prepare a proper plan, business was the first consideration. We must live before we can live well.... It was urgent that professional planners should do much more in solving the problems of better business planning, solutions which were essential if they were to secure...economic prosperity...." (15)

### Town Planning & Development

The need for politicians to reassure developers that town planning would not be used to hamper their operations can be seen in the way the



regulations for General Interim Development were introduced to local authorities. In August, 1922, Circular 329 stated,

"The Minister considers it important that permission to develop under the protection of section 45 of the Act of 1919 should not be withheld, unless there are very strong reasons; and he would urge the local authority to do everything possible to facilitate genuine proposals for development submitted to them during the preparation of schemes." (16)

This was re-emphasised a few months later in Circular 368 (January, 1923).

"The Minister considers that the presumption should always be in favour of the person who wishes to undertake development. Town planning is new, and it would not be right to attempt so close a control at the early stages as may be later warranted.... The Minister considers, therefore, that consent under the Interim Development Order should be refused only if the development contravenes a definite proposal which the local authority intend to include in their town planning scheme, and this proposal is clearly of first importance; and he proposed to follow this course in deciding appeals which may be made to him under the Order." (17)

The Minister for both circulars was Sir A. Griffith-Boscawen. The issue of development control was as major one for the Ministry and detailed guidance was given to local authorities in Memorandum 70/D (August, 1922) and in another Memorandum in May, 1923, as well as in the Annual Reports of the Ministry of Health, which were used to highlight Appeals and issues on development which the Ministry wished to impress upon local authorities.

## Compulsion & Persuasion

It was an objective of the government during the 1920s to secure as much co-operation among local authorities as possible where town planning was concerned. The 1919 Act had included provisions whereby local authorities could form Joint Town Planning Committees to oversee the planning of what was termed 'regions'. Regional planning was given much priority, particularly by the Ministry of Health right from the start of the 1919 Act. In fact, it is interesting to compare the degree of effort made by the Ministry to foster voluntary co-operation among local authorities in town planning compared to the attempts to secure compliance from the larger authorities to the obligatory clauses of the Act. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the compulsory clauses of the 1919 Act were effectively ignored by Ministry officials and successive Ministers. It is important, in this context, to recall that compulsory town planning was opposed by most of the professional town planning interests and was forced upon the government of the day by effective lobbying from the National Housing and Town Planning Council. The officials of the Ministry of Health who had most to do with town planning, Pepler, Gibbon and Harris, had all been opposed to compulsion. They recognised that many local authorities were reluctant to undertake town planning but felt that persuasion was the best policy. This attitude prevailed throughout the study period and the prime mechanism used to get authorities involved in town planning was by setting up Joint Committee to undertake regional schemes. One weakness in the town planning system that quickly became apparent was the exclusion of the County Councils. Neville Chamberlain was to put this right in his Local Government Act of 1929, but prior to that a number of efforts were made to secure the co-operation of the counties. In 1925 Circular 646 was aimed specifically at county councils urging

them to take an active part in town planning and Circular 647 was sent to the other local authorities urging them to consult and involve the counties as far as possible.(18)

### Local Government Opinion

Sensitivity to local authority opinions was an important political objective so far as town planning was concerned. The pressure of the leading urban authorities in 1908 and 1909 had assisted the placing of statutory town planning upon the agenda and then its passage through Parliament. There was however, no clear local authority message on town planning during the 1920s. The authorities as a collective whole, appeared satisfied that they had secured sufficient new powers to assist in the ordering of new development. There is no evidence of special enthusiasm nor of opposition. But when in 1931 it became apparent that the new National Government might not secure the passage of a new Town and Country Planning Act the local authorities mounted a campaign to save the Bill. Both associations and individual authorities organised campaigns. The Manchester and District Joint Town Planning Committee, for instance, lobbied all Joint Committees for support in putting pressure on M.P's and others to save the new Bill. At a conference in February, 1932, 81 authorities in the Manchester area supported this stand together with dozens of Joint Committees throughout the country. It is, therefore, unwise to dismiss the local authorities as generally disinterested in town planning as an issue. It would seem that having obtained town planning powers the local authorities were not only keen to retain such powers but, by the early 1930s, wanted such powers extended.

In the light of this examination of political objectives for town planning it is now possible to summarise the broad positions of the



political parties. The dominant Conservative influence moved from an initial support for town planning in order to forestall radical social movement to one of marginalising its impact. Town planning was tolerated and, under a sympathetic Minister such as Chamberlain, could be somewhat extended. But it was never enthusiastically embraced and opportunities to implement the 1919 Act to the full were lost. The Labour Party, when in office, showed a greater predilection for housing matters. Their official position was to embrace town planning and particularly to give effect to Garden City notions. But their record in office was weak. The 1929-31 Labour Government embarked upon some useful committee work, as already noted, by setting up the Addison Committee to look at the National Parks issue, the Marley Committee to study Garden Cities and the Chelmsford Committee to consider Regional Development. But since no legislation ensued in time, judgement cannot be made. The 1931 Town and Country Planning Bill, under the tutelage of A. Greenwood, had it become law, might have led to a different appraisal of this government's town planning record. The framework for Labour's approach in both 1924 and 1929-31 was, in practice, closer to concepts of a managed capitalism than a radical break with the system. In this respect they had moved much closer to the position of the Liberal Party.

Having considered the primary influences on statutory town planning between 1919 and 1933, it is now necessary to analyse the legislation itself. Through such an analysis it is hoped to establish a number of clear objectives by which the success and failure of such legislation may be judged.

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## Chapter 15 - Statutory Objectives for Town Planning

To evaluate the success and failure of legislation it is important to try and determine the objectives set for that legislation.

Consideration has been given to the broad contextual objectives of the town planning movement and to the more specific political agendas for town planning. Whilst these currents may well influence the emphasis given to the statutes and to the manner in which they are delivered, they do not provide the parameters and prime purpose of the legislations. For this it is necessary to discover the internal objectives present in the Acts and accompanying statutory instruments. This chapter seeks to provide the analysis which will furnish a set of objectives that are contained within the town planning laws relevant between 1919 and 1933. This will, in turn, provide the framework for evaluating the success and future of town planning legislation in this period. The starting point is provided by the substantive Act of 1909 which was then amended in important points in 1919. Other legislation was added, mainly through Housing Acts between 1919 and 1925 when town planning legislation was brought together into the 1925 Act. It will be necessary to consider the 1929 Local Government Act and finally to analyse the statutory orders and regulations.

### The 1909 Framework

The broad framework for statutory town planning was laid down by the second part of the Housing, Town Planning, etc. Act, 1909.<sup>(1)</sup> The main objectives of all statutory town planning in the period up to 1933 were established in this Act and may be summarised as:

- A: To secure town planning schemes for any land which is in the course of development or appears likely to be used for building purposes.



B: In undertaking such schemes the objects are to secure proper sanitary conditions, amenity and convenience in connection with the layout out and the use of the land or of any neighbouring lands.

Amenity, as used in the Act, was defined by Scrutton, in his dissenting judgement in *Re Ellis and Ruislip-Northwood U.D.C.* (1920) to mean 'pleasant circumstances or features, advantages'.<sup>(2)</sup>

### The Second Town Planning Act

Ten years following the passing of the 1909 Act it was amended and, in part, repealed by the Housing, Town Planning, etc. Act, 1919,<sup>(3)</sup> which removed the necessity for obtaining the previous authority of the Local Government Board (after 1919, the Ministry of Health) for the preparation or adoption of town planning schemes. The power of the Ministry of Health to make regulations as to procedure was extended, and the necessity for publication and the laying before Parliament of town planning schemes was removed. The Ministry of Health was also authorised to permit the development of estates and building operations pending the preparation or adoption of a town planning scheme. This gave greater strength to what came to be called Interim Development powers. Development could proceed if the local authority gave its approval before the completion of a scheme.

The 1919 Act also introduced compulsory town planning. The Council of every Borough or other Urban District having a population of more than 20,000 (according to the last census) was required to prepare and submit a town planning scheme, within three years from 1st January, 1923, of all land within the Borough or District in respect of which a scheme might be made under the Act of 1909. Power was also given to the Ministry of Health to order a local authority to prepare and submit

a scheme if it thought it was advisable and after a public inquiry. If the local authority concerned failed to do so within a specified time or failed to execute any of the works ordered by the Ministry then the Ministry was empowered to act, or if the population of the area was less than 20,000 the County Council could be empowered to act, in the place and at the expense of the local authority.

### Housing Acts, 1919, 1921 & 1923

The Housing (Additional Powers) Act, 1919, made provision for the acquisition of land for the purpose of developing town planning schemes.<sup>(4)</sup> The Housing Act, 1921 contained powers for the advance of capital for the development of garden cities.<sup>(5)</sup> The Housing, etc. Act, 1923 also contained a number of clauses of direct relevance to town planning. The time for the submission of town planning schemes was extended to 1st January, 1929, and provision was made by the Act for the method of determining compensation and for the withdrawal or modification of a scheme after an award of compensation in respect of property injuriously affected thereby. The Act also laid down that the rate of density of houses was not to exceed eight per acre in an agricultural parish and twelve per acre elsewhere, without the consent of the Minister.<sup>(6)</sup> In addition, the Act enabled the Minister to authorise local authorities to prepare schemes in areas of special architectural, historic or artistic interest.<sup>(7)</sup>

### The Town Planning Act, 1925

The Town Planning Act, 1925, consolidated the law relating to town planning in England and Wales, repealing Part II of the Housing, Town Planning, etc. Act 1909, Part IV (so far as it refers to town planning) and the 4th and 5th Schedules. Part II of the Housing, Town Planning, Etc. Act, 1919, was also repealed together with the 3rd Schedule. The

various parts of the Housing Acts, 1919, 1921 and 1923, referred to above were also repealed and consolidated into the new Town Planning Act.(8)

It should be noted that the 1925 Act applied only to England and Wales. There was a separate Act dealing with Scotland called the Town Planning (Scotland) Act, 1925, but it was in essence the same Act as in force in England and Wales.

#### Local Government Act, 1929

Between 1925 and the passing of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1932, there was only one more significant piece of legislation to affect town planning, although a number of minor enactments affected aspects of development, and that was the Local Government Act, 1929. Under this Act the County Councils were given important new powers to engage in town planning schemes. Power was first given to county councils to act jointly with other local authorities in the preparation of planning schemes and to play the part of an authority responsible for enforcing and carrying into effect the provisions of a scheme. Counties were also able to act as a town planning authority in their own right if county district councils agreed to delegate their planning powers and functions to the county council.(9)

#### Objectives set 1919-1933

From the main additional pieces of legislation to the original 1909 Act it is possible to identify five more objectives:

C: To ensure, through compulsion, the completion of town planning schemes for all the main urban areas.

D: To seek the protection of areas of special architectural and historic interest.



E: To uphold the principles of compensation for anyone injuriously affected by a town planning scheme and betterment for the community for increased values.

F: To ensure, through Interim Development Orders, that development was not unnecessarily delayed due to town planning.

G: To try to obtain the co-ordination of local authorities in town planning matters through Joint Committees.

### Contextual Legislation

Before looking at the regulations governing the main Town Planning Act, mention can be made of a number of other Acts of Parliament that impinged upon town planning, either in terms of placing obligations upon local authorities who were preparing town planning schemes, or as additional statutes to aid the control or implementation of development of one sort or another. The Allotments Act, 1925 <sup>(10)</sup> required that every local authority or Joint Committee preparing a town planning scheme must consider what provision ought to be included in the scheme for the reservation of land for allotments. Both the Public Health Act, 1925 <sup>(10)</sup> and the Roads Improvement Act, 1925 <sup>(10)</sup> gave powers to Highway authorities to establish improvement lines and building lines on roads. County councils were given powers to establish improvement lines of existing main roads provided they consulted the district councils. Controlling advertisements was an increasing problem for local authorities between the wars. Some assistance was given by the Advertisement Regulations Act, 1907, 1925 and the Public Health Amendment Act, 1907. Controlling petrol filling stations was given an added boost by the Petroleum (Consolidation) Act, 1928, which gave powers to county councils and county boroughs to make by-laws regulating their appearance and position. Buildings and structures of

a special architectural, historic, artistic or archaeological interest were afforded some protection under the Ancient Monuments Act, 1921, 1931. From these various statutes it is possible to deduce further objectives relevant to town planning but they are considered to be too minor for consideration in this context.

### Local Acts

It is important to note that a number of local authorities secured their own local acts which went further on town planning matters than that prescribed in national legislation. Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Birmingham and Derby, for instance, obtained special powers to prepare town planning schemes for built-up areas. 16 other authorities, mostly city corporations, did likewise between 1926 and 1932. But such powers were generally inadequate.<sup>(11)</sup>

### Town Planning Regulations

Accompanying the Town Planning Acts were a set of Procedural Regulations which were as important as the statutes themselves. These regulations governed the way an authority was required to proceed in undertaking a town planning scheme. The Act itself laid down the general approach as to procedure in a separate Clause. The Clause also gave powers to the Minister to issue, subsequent to the passing of the Act, detailed procedures to be followed by local authorities. The 1909 Act provides a valuable guide to the objectives that were aimed at in these procedures. Clause 56, Section 1, stated:

"Provision shall be made by those regulations:

- (a) For securing co-operation on the part of the local authority with the owners and other persons interested in the land proposed to be included in the scheme at every stage of the



proceedings, by means of conferences and such other means as may be provided by the regulations." (12)

The 1919 Act simplified this statement by omitting that part of the sentence which said "at every stage of the proceedings, by means of conferences". But the main point remained that town planning was to proceed on the basis of obtaining a consensus of views. The actual Regulations reinforced this approach with detailed procedures designed to ensure that owners received adequate notice and representation.

Preparing the detailed statutory regulations took a number of years and in certain particulars they were always under revision. The Regulations to the 1919 Act took two years to complete, after consultations with both local authorities and professional interests. The Ministry of Health (Town Planning) Regulations, 1921 revoked those of 1914, and laid down definitions, timetables and precise requirements for each stage of the process.<sup>(13)</sup> Within these regulations the broad philosophy of seeking the 'co-operation of owners' was given particular emphasis and direction. At the Preliminary Statement stage an instruction was given.

"The local authority shall take into consideration any objections and representations in writing which they may receive within the period specified... and shall take such steps as they think necessary by means of conferences or otherwise to secure so far as may be possible the agreement and co-operation of persons interested." (14)

A similar approach was required at the final scheme stage.

Representations were made possible at every stage of the process, except at the beginning when a local authority could pass a resolution to prepare a scheme without prior consultation with owners, but



thereafter it was necessary to advertise the resolution, to advertise the intention to proceed with a Preliminary Statement, to adopt and place 'on deposit' a draft of that Preliminary Statement and then to advertise its acceptance with or without modifications by the Minister of Health. The same procedures then had to be gone into once again with a draft scheme. Public inquiries could also be held at both stages.

### Statements, Orders & Memoranda

As well as the Regulations issued in 1921 a number of further Statements, Orders and Memoranda were issued by the Ministry of Health to clarify procedure. In April, 1921, a month after issuing the main Regulations the Ministry issued three Statements covering the Notation for Town Planning Maps, the Preliminary Statement of Proposals for Development and Model Form of Statement and Permission to Develop in Pursuance of Order under Section 45 of the 1919 Act.<sup>(15)</sup> The first two were designed to try and achieve conformity of style and format as well as aid those authorities who lacked technical skills in this field. The last statement was a stop-gap measure to fulfill the legal obligations within the Act to allow development to proceed whilst a town planning scheme was being prepared so long as the local authority gave it approval. In August, 1921, a further Statement was issued covering the Preparation of the Scheme and Consultation of Local Interests and, Allotments and Assistance in the Preparation of Schemes.<sup>(16)</sup> It is not clear whether these Statements have the same statutory power as official Regulations. In some cases they appear to, in others not. The August Statement reads more like a Circular and may more reasonably be seen as 'political' rather than 'statutory'. The Statement on consultation was re-issued to local authorities in 1926. It provides a valuable insight into the underlying approach of the

Government to Town Planning and for this reason it is reproduced as an Appendix. The Statement includes a general 'gloss' on consultation,

"The considered views of each class should be clearly ascertained, their goodwill secured and their wishes harmonised and satisfied to the fullest extent compatible with the public interest and the production of a sound scheme." (17)

What this meant in reality was shown in a further Statement indicating what a 'sound scheme' meant,

"It has to be remembered that a town plan is pre-eminently a business proposition, and, above all things has to be practical." (18)

In August, 1922, the Town Planning (General Interim Development) Order, 1922, was issued giving statutory power to the statement on development control, issued several months previously. (19) The main purpose of this procedure was to prevent the unnecessary delay in development caused by preparing a town planning scheme. Under the Act a developer was not forced to seek planning permission but if he did not and his development started after the commencement of a town planning scheme then he had no protection under law. Should the development not comply with the wishes of the local authority, as laid down in the town planning scheme, then the authority could enforce their proposals, demolishing, if necessary, the development at the owners' expense. The experience of the 1909 Act had been that owners held back from development until the town planning scheme was approved. Since this took years, land was apt to become sterilised. The General Interim Development Order got around this problem and greatly augmented the process of development control, hitherto, largely confined to upholding local by-laws.

Compensation was one of the first areas that the Ministry sought to clarify. Rules of Assessment were issued in 1919 and later extended in 1926.<sup>(20)</sup> Also in 1926 the Ministry issued, Town Planning (Land in Neighbourhood of Royal Palaces or Parks) Regulations<sup>(21)</sup> which established the need to consult with the Commissioner of Works if any town planning schemes came within two miles of Windsor or half a mile of any other Royal Palace or Park.

### Model Procedure

Finally, a whole range of model forms and model clauses were prepared by the Ministry for use in connection with both interim development control and the preparation of schemes. Model planning permission forms were prepared, model notices of advertisements, model resolutions and, in fact, every conceivable aspect of the planning process was subject to an ideal form issued by the Ministry.<sup>(22)</sup> Model Clauses for Use in the Preparation of Town Planning Scheme, were first issued in 1923 and regularly expanded and revised. By 1928 the Model Clauses provided 68 clauses covering every conceivable aspect of the scheme.<sup>(23)</sup> The clauses were not compulsory but in practice the Ministry did not appreciate deviation and the drive was undoubtedly to uniformity and standardisation.

### Procedural Objectives

From the procedure regulations and supplementary statements it is possible to extract two further main objectives established by the statutory provisions:

H: To seek the co-operation of the owners of land and others interested in land in the planning process and to try to resolve objections by reaching agreements.



I: To ensure uniformity of approach by local authorities in town planning methodology and procedure.

The first of these objectives was very important in helping to promote a consensus approach to statutory town planning. The second was partly prompted by the desire of central government to exercise a measure of control over local government, but was also designed to assist those authorities who lacked trained staff to undertake this new technical activity.

Taken together the key objectives identified in this chapter can be seen to provide the ostensible rationale and approach of statutory town planning between 1919 and 1933. The next chapter, the last in this Part, will take each objective in turn and examine, so far as the evidence is available, how far it was met.

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## Chapter 16 - The Success & Failure of Statutory Town Planning, 1919-1933

The objectives of town planning have been set out in terms of professional, political and statutory aims. But, as already observed, the statutory objectives largely reflected the professional and political aims and it is to these two sources that one must look for the deeper, underlying purposes of statutory town planning.

The broad conclusion to be drawn from an analysis of the political and professional inputs is that they both reinforced the other to present a legitimising ideology for town planning based upon notions of improving the physical environment to achieve greater efficiency of society. As such town planning formed part of the wider set of activities that represented an attempt to improve the capitalist system between the wars. These wider activities included the growing role of state intervention in housing, agriculture, social welfare and industry. Nowhere, least of all in town planning, was this a determined and coherent pattern of intervention. But there was a growing recognition that the market system required more control and that private initiative needed more support and sustenance. Town planning addressed the important issue of the future development of land on the fringes of the urban areas. In order to manage this process more effectively and efficiently new sets of control were required, less complicated than pre-war and more likely to find favour with local authorities and local land owners.

For many town planners the objectives for town planning were too narrow. They argued for the extension of power to include built-up land and the countryside. This viewpoint was accepted by 1931 and was incorporated into the 1932 Act. Town planners also argued for more effective powers to prevent sprawl and ribbon development, to limit the



size of cities and build satellite towns or garden cities. In this they were much less successful. But even these arguments were within the parameters set by the 'efficiency ideology' and were eventually conceded in the 1940s.

For the politicians there were disagreements over objectives. Many within the Labour and Liberal ranks supported the position of town planners to widen the scope and effectiveness of existing legislation. Some came to adopt a broader vision of national planning for efficiency in which town planning would play its role. This has been discussed in the context of the 'great planning debate'. On the Conservative side, while some like Harold Macmillan came to accept a 'planning' position and others sought actively to restrict or even to end town planning, most thought that the process went far enough and required no great change.

It is against this background that the success or failure of town planning needs to be assessed. It would be as wrong to portray town planning as a failure because far reaching social change did not occur as it would be to see it as a success simply because it survived. The aims for town planning were rather modest and perhaps because of this it is possible to view it as having been more successful than has generally been stated.

In the last chapter nine main objectives were identified from the statutory legislation of town planning. It is possible to look at the evidence and see how far these nine objectives were achieved in the period under consideration. The availability of evidence, however, varies between the different objectives.

A - To secure town planning schemes for land which is in the course of development or appears likely to be used for building purposes

It is possible to go some way to measuring the success of this objective. Taken at face value the optimum result would have been to have achieved full statutory schemes for all potentially developable areas. Two factors mitigate against such an assessment. In the first place, it is not possible to say accurately how much land was in question. It might be possible to make an estimate but it would require considerable research beyond the aims of this study. Secondly, since planning control could be exercised simply by local authorities undertaking just the first phase of the planning process, it would present a false picture simply to account only for approved final schemes. The overall position in terms of the cumulative growth in the adoption of town planning schemes, the number of local authorities involved and the total acreage included within schemes is listed in the table below:

Table 4. Town Planning under the 1909 & 1919 Acts; A Cumulative Picture

Year Ended 31st March	No. of Schemes	No. of Authorities	Acreage
1909	0	0	0
1911	3	2	9,668
1913	33	28	50,611
1915	105	86	167,604
1917	138	117	242,263
1919	155	132	279,217
1921	239	148	584,616
1923	304	185	875,421
1925	433	281	1,781,463
1927	572	360	2,751,801
1929	772	492	4,456,712
1931	958	595	6,846,036
1933	1,235	742	9,383,816

Source: Ministry of Health Annual Reports.

The line across the table after 1919 indicates the approximate division between what was achieved under the 1909 Act and under the 1919 Act.

Where the table refers to the number of schemes this simply indicates that a scheme has been embarked upon. Before 1919 all schemes required the express permission of the Local Government Board, after 1919 an authority merely had to notify the Ministry that it had passed a Resolution to prepare a scheme (except in certain cases). On the face of it these figures reveal a remarkable expansion in the activity of town planning under the 1919 Act. The position, by 1933 was that 9.4 million acres or, 25.3% of all land in England and Wales was subject to a town planning scheme at some stage or another.<sup>(1)</sup> Given that the total urban area of England and Wales was 4,504,928 acres, as at the 1931 Census,<sup>(2)</sup> the area subject to town planning control was, at least in total, if not in distribution, amply adequate to cover any possible suburban sprawl. This is not to argue that the planning controls were effective - indeed they were palpably not - but, in terms of the objective being considered, the Act must be seen as relatively successful. In many ways the application of town planning had gone beyond the originally limited territorial objective. 9.4 million acres represents vastly more coverage than was strictly required. According to the Census, under 500,000 acres of additional urban land was added between 1911 and 1931.<sup>(3)</sup> In fact the Ministry of Health encouraged local authorities to embark on schemes which incorporated large hinterland areas to the main towns and cities.<sup>(4)</sup> In the light of the need to embrace the planning of an enhanced road network such a policy made obvious sense but went beyond the original concept.

The number of local authorities involved in town planning also witnessed a rapid upturn after 1919. The number of potential town planning authorities varied during the period, as some authorities altered their status, but the fluctuation was very small. In 1931 there were 1,717 Boroughs and Districts and 62 Counties. The County



Councils only became potential planning authorities after 1930.(5)

Taking all authorities as potential town planning authorities, the position by 1933 was that 42% of all authorities were involved in some aspect of statutory town planning. However, within the total were 647 Rural Districts, many of which were not able to engage in town planning under the 1919 Act by virtue of the fact that they had no land about to be developed. If one arbitrarily excluded, say 400, Rural Authorities from the potential total then the percentage of authorities participating in town planning increases to 54%.

The main counter argument to this evidence is that only a very small amount of land and a very few local authorities were either able or willing to pursue a town planning scheme through to the complete end. The following table appears to bear this out.

Table 5. The Position of Town Planning Schemes in England & Wales as at 31st March, 1933

Position of the Scheme	No. of Schemes	No. of Local Authorities	Acreage Covered
1. Finally approved	94	50	152,182
2. Submitted, under consideration	34	17	56,464
3. Drafts on local deposit	33	20	67,758
4. Preliminary Statements approved	236	152	948,557
5. Preliminary Statements submitted	113	97	829,658
6. Resolutions made	690	550	1,242,578
7. Schemes authorities not submitted	47	33	86,619
	1,235	742	9,383,816

Source: Based upon Ministry of Health Annual Report, 1932/33.

On the basis that the objective of statutory town planning was to achieve fully approved schemes then it was a failure. As the table shows, only 152,182 acres achieved that status after 24 years of legislation, representing only 1.5% of all the land under some form of planning control. Only 50 local authorities could claim to have been so involved, a mere 3.6% of the total potential number of authorities in England and Wales. But such an evaluation ignores the reality of town planning under the 1919 Act. As we have noted, a local authority could achieve the control over development it needed simply by passing a resolution of its intention to prepare a scheme. Of course, in refusing any new development it would need to convince the Minister, in an appeal, that such proposals went against the planned intentions of the authority and so needed to show in some form what its planned intentions were. But this could, and was often achieved by reference to general evidence of the local authorities' intentions or to a specific plan for a road or an estate. In many ways the undertaking of a full town planning scheme did not offer the local authority a great many advantages. It could strengthen its position viz-a-viz developers but it did not materially alter it. A further observation is that the Preliminary Statement was in effect a pre-scheme. In other words the level of detail, public consultation, and Ministry approval was exactly the same as under the draft scheme stage. Many authorities having gone through the Preliminary Statement stage, usually for several years, undertaken countless modifications as the result of objections and Ministry requirements, as well as adjusting to changing local situations, were reluctant to go through the whole process again. It is more realistic to view Table 5 in two parts. On the one hand there were those authorities who simply passed a resolution or were authorised by the Ministry to undertake a scheme, i.e. 6 and 7 in the Table, and on the other hand the remaining authorities who had prepared



detailed schemes for their area, i.e. 1 to 5 in the Table. On this basis the number of authorities who engaged in more detailed planning increases to 336, the number of schemes to 510, and acreage to 2,054,619. Thus a much healthier picture emerges of local authority engagement in detailed town planning. Added to this, many local authorities included in the 583 who ostensibly only passed resolutions, must have taken town planning further but for one reason or another never submitted a Preliminary Statement. Indeed, towards the end of the study period the Ministry of Health were encouraging local authorities to proceed directly to the Draft Scheme stage and miss out the Preliminary Statement stage.

In overall terms there is a good case to be made that much of Objective A was in fact achieved during the course of the 1919 Act. Indeed had that not been the situation it is unlikely that a case could have been credibly presented for the extension of town planning powers to embrace all land. The main local authority associations were to the forefront in this demand between 1930 and 1932, indicating that, whatever the figures may seem to show the local authorities had substantially delivered the rather limited remit of this objective.

B - To secure proper sanitary conditions, amenity and convenience in connection with the layout out and the use of land or of any neighbouring land

An objective assessment of the factors involved in this aim would prove very difficult even if all the information could be assembled. In the Ministry of Health's Annual Report for 1930/31, a section was included entitled, 'Some Results of Town Planning' which referred to a survey undertaken among local authorities engaged in the preparation of town planning schemes. The Ministry's conclusion on the result of this survey was,



"... there can be little doubt that what is now being done at comparatively trifling expense under town planning schemes to secure amenity and convenience in the laying out of land will be a source of large ultimate saving to the community in many directions." (6)

There then followed a number of chosen extracts from the replies received from the local authorities. From these replies it is clear that the Ministry's survey is the same as that referred to by George Pepler in his paper presented to the Town Planning Institute in January, 1931, called, 'Twenty One Years of Town Planning in England and Wales'.(7) From this article it is apparent that the survey was far from scientific. Pepler, in his paper, asked, "...what have all these legislative, ministerial, municipal, etc., activities achieved?" and went on,

"An ounce of authentic information is worth a ton of surmise . and, therefore, once again I turned to some of my many friends among the Town Clerks and Municipal Engineers of this country - most of them members of this Institute - and asked for information as to definite results in the districts in their charge." (8)

The results given by Pepler in his paper and summarised in the Ministry's Annual Report are bound to present a rosy picture. They are a pre-judged and self-interested sample. But it need not be totally dismissed since Pepler had asked for concrete examples and received, according to him, a mass of information, plans and photographs. The results were presented in terms of examples of achievement in such matters as; acquiring public open space; reserving private open space; allotments and agricultural reservations; new streets; building lines;

residential districts saved from the intrusion of shops, factories or garages; industrial areas kept free for that purpose; improved estate development; and economies resulting from town planning. Pepler's conclusions were,

"The results quoted above are only a few samples, but they do seem to indicate that although a lot of the building that is going on may fall far short of our ideals and while we may deplore certain urban encroachments on our countryside, there is nevertheless plenty of ground to encourage us to renew our efforts.

If we remember the kind of development that was proceeding twenty one years ago, when, for example, it was almost universal practice for an estate developer, as his first act, to cut down all growing timber; when each estate was developed in isolation with a reserved strip at the end of each road, at the boundary (if any reached the boundary) for the next man to buy if inter-communication was sufficiently desired, we can say that today there is a marked improvement." (9)

Perhaps there was no one else better placed to make such a judgement and while noting the lack of comparative evidence his views are an important record. Pepler's views were also backed-up by prominent professionals who attempted to quantify town planning achievements in producing convenience and amenity.

F. Marsden, for instance, the City Engineer and Surveyor for Bradford sought to cost a whole series of economies.<sup>(10)</sup> He argued that the cost of widening existing streets was three to four times more expensive than building new roads (in Bradford for instance the two costs per mile were £133,049 and £64,590). Thus by wise forethought through

building new roads considerable long-term savings could be and were being achieved. He drew attention to an argument put forward many years earlier by R. Unwin<sup>(11)</sup> and others that estates developed along town planning lines gave considerable savings to the owners because there was less need for estate roads and street works than was the case under old by-law housing. (Savings were put at £62 per house at densities of 12 dwellings per acre). Figures were also produced to show the savings to be made by building arterial roads, by-passes and orbital roads. Such investment, it was plausibly argued saved congestion which could be costed in terms of lost time. For every 2½ miles per hour lost the annual loss to a 3 ton lorry was calculated as between £579 and £643 depending on other variables.

Marsden reiterated the well-used town planning argument that it was more healthy to live in town-planned areas than in areas of the old type of densities of population. Using Bradford as an example he pointed to death rates of 16.16 per thousand in congested wards compared to rates of 12.14 and 12.43 per thousand in low density wards which contained estates developed along town planning lines. Evidence on national lines was introduced to show that the death rates in Letchworth Garden City were only 6.7 per thousand compared to a national rate of 11.4 per thousand. Marsden went on to argue that zoning also produced economies by simplifying service arrangements and stabilising land values. Mention was made of the planning gain to be made by obtaining agreements with owners of land on maintaining open spaces and playingfields. By the local authority agreeing to assist in the opening up of some land for development by building roads or sewage schemes owners could be persuaded to sell or reserve land for public open space.



Marsden went on to identify some less quantifiable advantages of town planning. These included 'the moral, mental and spiritual uplift' that resulted from a more open, beautiful environment. This he saw as a 'sound natural investment'.(12)

Finally, Marsden reported on replies he had received from those colleagues he had asked to furnish their own examples of economies and advantages. He cited from these replies, which represented several of the great cities of England, including Birmingham, Bristol, Hull, Leeds, Letchworth, Liverpool, Ruislip-Northwood, Welwyn Garden City and Leicester.

A few months later Mr. Longstreth Thompson in his Presidential Address to the Town Planning Institute returned to the same theme, particularly concerning the economies to be achieved through road planning.(13)

Thompson thought that as a result of town planning,

"..this country now possesses probably the most complete and efficient road system in the world." (14)

Thompson calculated that through improvements to the road system town planning was saving the country at least £3 million a year and perhaps £6 million. On the issue of layout Thompson calculated that the 2 million houses built since the war on town planning lines represented a saving on road construction of between £30 and £40 million.(15)

These observations by Pepler, Marsden and Thompson cannot be treated as scientific evidence from disinterested sources but they do indicate a confidence from within the profession that town planning had been successful in improving convenience and enhancing amenity and that in some respects this could be quantified.

C - To ensure, through compulsion, the completion of town planning schemes for all the major urban areas

Major urban areas were defined as those with a population in excess of 20,000 at the time of the 1921 Census. There were 262 such authorities and by 1931, 208 had started the process. This represents a 79% success rate. However, this success is tempered by the fact that several authorities only submitted schemes for parts of their area, omitting other potential areas. As already discussed compulsion did not find favour among either the Ministry of Health, the professionals or the authorities concerned. Under Town Planning Regulations the larger authorities were obliged to commence town planning in 1923 and submit schemes by 1926. A Circular was issued by the Ministry in 1925 reminding the larger authorities of these obligations.<sup>(16)</sup> But subsequently there was no special effort by the Ministry of Health. In their Annual Report for 1927/28 the Ministry of Health noted that 169 authorities who were obliged to undertake town planning had started the planning process but that 98 still had yet to do anything.<sup>(17)</sup> The Local Government Act, 1929, extended the deadline for submission of schemes to 1934.

In that year the Ministry of Health's Annual Report raised the issue,

"...the Minister urges those local authorities upon whom town planning is obligatory to undertake without delay the preliminary work of survey and preparation with a view to taking the initial formal procedure itself as soon as possible." <sup>(18)</sup>

The position by 1933 was not a disaster. Nearly 80% of all the required authorities had made some efforts, although few had actually achieved approval for their schemes. The 54 recalcitrant authorities did represent a nagging concern that town planning had not penetrated

to all those key urban areas considered so crucial when the objectives were set in 1919.

D - To seek the protection of areas of special architectural and historic interest

This provision was made in the Housing Act, 1923, and consolidated into the 1925 Town Planning Act. By 1933 a number of local authorities had used the procedure to try and protect the historic core of their towns and cities. Oxford was the first to apply to use the new powers in 1924. By 1930 they had been joined by Exeter, Canterbury, Winchester, Southampton and Stratford. This was not a very good result by any standards. There were vastly more than six historic town centres requiring protection and town planning control. Others did achieve control through other means, sometimes by obtaining their own Act of Parliament. But on limited evidence this objective does not seem to have been met.

The Ministry of Health also encouraged local authorities to seek the free service of Advisory Panels of Architects and others on development in the countryside and other sensitive areas. These Panels had been suggested by the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (C.P.R.E.) in 1926. Some local authorities built such a system of advice into local Acts of Parliament and this was endorsed by the Ministry of Health.<sup>(19)</sup> The Panels usually comprised local architects nominated by the R.I.B.A., members of the C.P.R.E. and the Institute of Builders. The idea was to try and improve the design and layout of new buildings, particularly in historic or beautiful settings. In Oxford and Cambridge, Preservation Trusts were established, with similar objectives. These too were encouraged by the Ministry of Health.<sup>(20)</sup>



The success of these Panels is difficult to judge. In the first place they were not widely accepted by local authorities. This may have been due to a political desire to retain control, reinforced by officials who considered that their professional training equipped them in the task quite adequately. The Ministry of Health tried to encourage local authorities by exhortation. In their Annual Report for 1931/32 they pointed out that their information suggested that where the Panel system was in operation, notably Hampshire and Oxfordshire satisfactory results were achieved.(21)

But in overall terms the success of town planning and allied legislation in preserving the historic legacy of Britain's past was generally judged a failure. Contemporary reports contained example after example of outrage. The book, Britain and the Beast, gloomily concluded,

"The trouble is indeed deep seated, far gone and seemingly ineradicable save by some major operation of statecraft.." (22)

Ten years earlier, in 1928, Clough Williams-Ellis in England and the Octopus had catalogued the destruction of Britain's heritage.(23) It seems that the Town Planning Act, the Ancient Monuments Act, the work of Advisory Panels and bodies like the National Trust and the C.P.R.E. succeeded only in preventing a more rapid erosion of beauty spots, fine buildings and areas of special interest.

#### E - To uphold the principles of compensation and betterment

Town planning under the 1919 Act was essentially regulatory and therefore, not likely to incur massive amounts of compensation due to the generation of development. However, the fear of having to pay substantial compensation invested most local authorities' actions under town planning with much caution. One tendency was to zone large areas

of land for housing, considerably more than was required. This was to avoid owners seeking claims for any possible loss of value in their land. But the depression in land values throughout the 1920s ensured that compensation was not a major issue. It received very little airing in the technical press at this time.

During the 1930s as land values rose the problems of potential compensation increased and the caution of local authorities also grew. This was noted by the Uthwatt Committee which was appointed in 1941 'to make an objective analysis of the subject of the payment of compensation and the recovery of betterment in respect of the public control of the use of land'.(24)

"Unquestionably the greatest obstacle to really effective planning has been the fear on the part of planning authorities of incurring indefinite liabilities in the matter of compensation if the extreme step of forbidding development is taken." (25)

Compensation in a market economy illuminates the core of the tension between public and private interest. Where private interest is dominant then the position of the public authority is weak and defensive. This was the position throughout the inter-war years. There seems little doubt that the main political objective behind compensation was to ensure that the balance was retained in favour of the private land owner and in this it could be said to be successful. This position is also reflected in the question of betterment. Under the 1919 Act betterment was set at 50% of the enhanced values caused by public planning policies. Sometimes betterment was not collected as a separate charge but was set-off against compensation.(26) But as Uthwatt noted, in neither case was it successful.



"Of the existing methods for recovering 'betterment' in its strict sense of increase in the value of land due to particular public improvements or provisions of planning schemes, set-off has been of little practical effect; direct charge under the Town Planning Acts has been a failure; and there is no prospect that either method will be any more successful in the future, mainly because their first requisite is one which cannot be satisfied, viz. the identification or segregation of the strict 'betterment' element in the total increase in the value of any property." (27)

The evaluation of success and failure in this field is somewhat fraught. Taken at face value one might judge that the compensation provisions were interpreted as the framers of the legislation wished, but that betterment was a failure. On the other hand that would represent a contradiction. More likely that the betterment provisions, already weakly set at only 50%, were never intended to be vigorously collected. Having said that, re-couping land values for the community has proved a notoriously difficult task even for committed reformers.

F - To ensure, through Interim Development Orders, that development was not unnecessarily delayed due to town planning

The Ministry of Health spent a good deal of effort in the early stages of the 1919 Act exhorting local authorities not to delay development unless it was absolutely essential. Experience under the 1909 Act had been that considerable areas of land had been sterilised. The Interim Development procedures were designed to prevent that occurring again and in this they appear to have been successful. No doubt there were examples of delays but generally development proceeded without great delay. Between 1919 and 1932 nearly two million houses were built,



many in Town Planning Scheme areas under Interim Development Control. Several thousand factories were also built in this time.

G - To try and obtain the co-ordination of local authorities in town planning matters through establishing Joint Committees

This objective was in many ways a fusion of statutory and professional aims. The legislation provided the opportunity for local authorities to collaborate in preparing town planning schemes but it was the Ministry of Health that made this into a much more positive policy instrument. This wasn't politically inspired but had its roots in the desire of many professional town planners to see town planning applied to more rational areas than local authority boundaries. In general terms, it proved to be a very effective policy. The policy had the added advantage of encouraging the more reluctant authorities to participate in a new activity. Left to their own devices many authorities would probably not have become involved. Joint committees were, therefore, a method of spreading the practice of town planning, as well as undertaking what was called 'regional' planning.

The spread of Joint Town Planning Committees (JTPC's) proceeded throughout the study period until by 1933 there were over 100 JTPC's in England and Wales. Progress was relatively rapid as the summary table illustrates.

Table 6. The Formation of Joint Town Planning Committee, 1920-33

Year	No. of Committees	Local Authorities Involved	Acreage
1920-21	4 (-)	117	848,091
1921-22	3 (-)	48	308,846
1922-23	7 (-)	70	755,729
1923-24	11 (1)	168	2,051,292
1924-25	5 (-)	35	515,716
1925-26	3 (-)	61	658,370
1926-27	15 (5)	124	1,609,179
1927-28	15 (7)	Not available	N/A
1928-29	17 (10)	114	2,122,601
1929-30	7 (3)	51	947,570
1930-31	13 (6)	88	2,165,378
1931-32	8 (7)	70	1,123,651
1932-33	8 (7)	39	1,073,252

Source: Derived from Annual Reports of the Ministry of Health.

NB: It is not possible to sum the figures as there was a degree of double-counting by the Ministry. Some of the larger advisory Joint Committees later split into smaller executive committees.

The executive committees are indicated by the figures in brackets.

The Ministry of Health, usually in the person of Pepler, spent a considerable amount of time and effort in persuading authorities to set up JTPC's. After five years of sustained effort the Ministry of Health could pride itself that 427 local authorities were involved in England and Wales in 30 separate JTPC's covering over 4 million acres in total area.(28) However, all except one of these were only engaged in

preparing advisory planning schemes. From the mid-1920s on the Ministry were exhorting Joint Committees to become Executive Committees with delegated powers to undertake statutory schemes. This proved to be a much slower process. By 1933 there were still only 45 Executive Committees. But the scope of the JTPC's was extensive and covered practically all the main urban zones as well as several areas of outstanding natural beauty, e.g. the Lake District and Snowdonia. By 1933 there were over 100 JTPC's in England and Wales covering over 12 million acres of land. In terms of getting local authorities involved in the planning process, the 'regional planning' objective of the Ministry of Health was probably one of their most successful inter-war ventures. Joint action probably did act as a conveyor belt to the statutory town planning process, though it is difficult to prove one way or another. But Advisory Committees introduced local authorities to planning concepts and fired imaginations. Local officials, too, were brought into contact with the activity in a relatively painless way. By acting together authorities were able to share the costs and in an age when ratepayers were ever diligent over expenditure councillors needed to be careful about committing an authority to new expenditure.

The qualitative side of the Joint Committee's work is more difficult to assess. Several Regional Plans were prepared, often by eminent architects and town planners. Town planning consultants were very busy in this period doing this kind of work. Between 1922 and 1933, 33 Regional Plans were produced. Many of these were elegant and contained far-reaching proposals. In practical terms their value is more questionable. Most Joint Committees, who later changed from advisory bodies to executive ones, had to start from scratch. The Regional Plan might have provided a general framework but either lacked detail or



became quickly out of date. Their main impact was as a way of ensuring a degree of co-ordination in planning new roads. When, after 1930, the County Councils could and did become involved in Joint Committee work as equal partners this element of the plan was strengthened. Few of the Joint Committees were in fact large enough to operate as effective Regional Planning bodies. The Manchester and District Joint Committee and the Midlands Joint Committee were two exceptions that brought together considerable numbers of local authorities into a forum that was particularly valuable in the fractured local government administration of large urban areas. Manchester embraced 89 different authorities and covered an area of over 1,000 acres. Its regional plan of 1926 offered a useful framework and several smaller executive joint committees were later formed to implement the strategy by undertaking statutory schemes.<sup>(29)</sup> The Midlands Joint Committee was larger in area than Manchester and linked together 70 authorities.<sup>(30)</sup>

Efforts to obtain joint working in the largest metropolitan area, Greater London, were only partially successful. After years of no progress the Town Planning Institute and other professional bodies lobbied the then Minister of Health, Neville Chamberlain, who was persuaded to act.<sup>(31)</sup> In December, 1926, he convened a Conference of all local authorities in London, including County Councils, and the already established Joint Committees operating within the London Traffic area. The Conference agreed to establish a Regional Committee for Greater London. Raymond Unwin was later appointed as Technical Advisor. Several interim reports were published indicating an imaginative level of thinking drawing upon garden city and urban containment ideas. Two main reports were approved, in 1929 and 1933<sup>(32)</sup> but shortly after the issuing of the second report, financial restrictions, which had been imposed after the economic crisis of 1931, proved too severe and the venture collapsed.

Joint working can be assessed in several ways. It is suggested here that in terms of primary objectives the Ministry of Health were more concerned with engaging local authorities in town planning than in the implementation of the Regional Planning proposals. In the longer run the influence of the Regional Plans upon local authorities, other professionals and perhaps local and national politicians, may have been significant and aided the later acceptance of planning ideas in the 1940s.

H - To seek the co-operation of the owners of land and others interested parties in the planning process and to try to resolve objections by compromise

The thrust of this objective was to ensure that local authorities in implementing town planning did not try to do so in an aggressive manner, nor in any way which might endanger the interest of the land owner or those commercial and business interests that had a stake in land. It does not appear that the intention was to use the act to win over these interests to town planning. Rather, it was to make sure that town planning did not ride roughshod over those with a private interest in land. Such an objective was entirely understandable given the composition of the Houses of Parliament that passed the law in the first place. That the local authorities would by and large need very little persuading of the rightness of such an outlook is unremarkable. What is more interesting is that such an approach was couched in consensus terms and that such a notion were central to the ideology of town planning. There was a widespread view within the planning profession that the possible conflict of public and private interest that town planning may expose could be dealt with by compromise and agreement without damage to the quality of town planning. Indeed, it was often seen that the very essence of town planning was the arrival

at just such a compromise. This theme is explored in detail in the next part of the study when local situations are examined to see whether or not disagreements between public and private interests were resolved through agreement and compromise or whether one set of interests consistently won through.

Quantifying the evidence for this objective is extremely difficult. One indicator of the level of conflict and failure to resolve issues through co-operation and agreement is the level of appeals and their outcomes. But this method leaves out of the reckoning all the objections and disputes settled locally without recourse to appeals. As the case studies will demonstrate many of the issues that arose in the course of undertaking a town planning scheme were major clashes of principle that were not appeal material. In that situation the main 'umpire' was the Ministry of Health. No record exists of how many disputes between a local authority and an owner, in the course of preparing a planning scheme, were found in the ~~favour~~ of the owner of the planning authority or how many resulted in genuine compromise.

Appeals were recorded by the Ministry of Health in terms of those relating to Approved Schemes and those relating to Interim Development Orders. In the first year that this distinction was made, 1924/5, the Ministry received 29 appeals under Interim Development Orders and 2 under Approved Schemes.<sup>(33)</sup> In 1931/2 the respective numbers were 185 and 10.<sup>(34)</sup> These figures are generally consistent with the growth in land under Town Planning schemes. The small growth in the number of appeals received for Approved Schemes suggests that the main disputes were settled in the course of scheme verification. Of the 185 appeals received under Interim Development in 1931/32, 67 were settled by agreement, 37 lapsed, 48 were dismissed and 34 upheld.<sup>(35)</sup>



There seems little doubt that Objective H was attained so far as the Ministry of Health and the politicians were concerned. There is little evidence that disputes and conflicts seethed wherever town planning was undertaken. The constant exhortations by the Ministry to local authorities to uphold this objective indicates that they were very nervous about possible bad publicity resulting from attempts by public authorities to achieve community interests against the objections of local landowners or industry. As the debates over the 1932 Town and Country Planning Act indicate, concern that land interests would take every opportunity to sabotage and downgrade town planning were proven to be real worries. But these Parliamentary debates also indicate that the Ministry approach had in no way mollified those opposed to planning. There is, therefore, a case to be made that this objective was a success and a failure at the same time. It was successful in achieving the desired approach by local authorities that led them not to challenge private owners' interests and to present this as 'planning by agreement'. But, they were not successful in convincing these same private interests that, therefore, town planning was somewhat toothless and could be tolerated.

I - To ensure a uniformity of approach by local authorities in town planning methodology and procedure

This, the last objective to be considered in this chapter, is one that can be said to have been successfully achieved. The Ministry of Health was in a strong position to influence how local authorities went about their tasks in town planning. Few authorities had developed their own tradition or had the resources or in-house expertise to try experiments. Being a new activity the local authority relied upon the guidance of the Ministry. The only problem from the Ministry's point of view was that they too had to start virtually from scratch. Until

Model Clauses were issued in 1923 there was no clear path for local authorities to follow in preparing a written scheme. Map notation had been laid down by 1921 and was thereafter modified regularly as were the Model Clauses. The Ministry of Health was learning by experience and as each new situation occurred their legal and other professional advisors sought to obtain a definitive position to pass on to local authorities. By 1933 most of the teething problems had been overcome and local authorities produced more or less identically structured schemes. Interim Development was also subject to standardisation in terms of planning applications, typical decisions, notices and the like. One persistent problem for town planners throughout this period was the problem of obtaining a good set of Ordnance Survey base maps. The Ministry insisted that maps be produced on O.S. base maps and since many were out of date, the local authority had to spend time and money bringing them up to date. But this was a relatively minor problem. Overall this objective had been achieved by 1933.

### Conclusions

It is possible now to reach some general conclusions about the success or otherwise of statutory town planning in England and Wales between 1919 and 1933. Nine objectives for statutory town planning have been evaluated. The general observation can be made that of the nine, six could be said to have achieved varying degrees of success; Objective A, relating to the spread of statutory town planning schemes; B, relating to convenience and amenity; F, relating to Interim Development; G, relating to the spread of "Regional" planning; H, relating to co-operation and compromise with owners, and I relating to uniformity of practice. One, Objective D, relating to protecting areas of historic or architectural significance can be seen to have failed and two, Objectives C and E, relating to obligatory town planning and

compensation and betterment can be seen to have aspects of success and failure. These more detailed considerations need to be set within the wider realm of political purpose for a genuine overview of success and failure.

It can be seen from the preceding chapters that the context for town planning offered many countervailing currents. On the one hand, there was a powerful tide in favour of more state management and control, but on a capitalist basis. On the other hand, such views were not usually overt and were often overlain by an anti-planning ideology. The controlling interests in society, the industrial, financial and landed interests, may have been in the process of accepting more and more limits to their traditional freedom of action, but were often consciously seeking to defend those freedoms. In government the Conservative Party were the dominant force and whilst they undertook many aspects of state intervention, including town planning, they were, as a Party, generally unenthusiastic about such an approach. Given this lack of thorough political support and the, as yet, uncertain success of a broader planning belief, town planning was bound to be only partially successful. The activity relied upon a strong Governmental lead from the top and a purposeful and professional direction at the local government base. In fact it received neither in full measure. Yet this does not mean that town planning was a complete failure between the wars. There was a measure of strong support for town planning at central government level. Key officials in the Ministry of Health, particularly George Pepler, were tireless in their espousal of the activity. Within the Cabinets of the time, a number of important politicians made active contributions to town planning, notably Neville Chamberlain, who was Minister of Health between 1924 and 1929 and also briefly in 1923 and again in 1931 and Arthur



Greenwood, who was Minister of Health between 1929 and 1931. At the local level the Local Authorities' Associations, particularly the Municipal Association, had a long record of fighting for statutory provision for town planning and were to the fore in 1931-32 seeking to defend statutory town planning against the concerted attack of opposing interests. At officer level the input of Town Clerks, Engineers, Surveyors and Town Planners was vitally important in getting schemes off the ground. In the professional field the Town Planning Institute was an important forum for developing general technical abilities and helping to influence good practice.

But these are somewhat sweeping generalisations. Before seeking to refine the judgements about success and failure further, it is important to study town planning in some detail as it was practised at the local level. In order to do this an empirical study was made of statutory town planning in three separate, but related areas, South Teesside, North Teesside and Hartlepool. It is to these local studies that the next Part turns.

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26. See, for example, a statement made by F.E. Warbreck-Howell, the Town Clerk to Manchester, at a conference in Scarborough in November, 1932, of the National Housing and Town Planning Council when he asserted,  
  
"although very little had been achieved up to the present in securing payment of betterment, there was no doubt that betterment provisions were a great asset in bargaining in relation to claims for compensation."
27. Young, G.M., op.cit. p.129.

28. Ministry of Health, Annual Report, 1924/25, Cmd. 2450 Table given in Appendix VII, p.166.
29. A useful review of the Manchester Regional Report can be found in the Journal of the Town Planning Institute, Vol.XII, March, 1926, pp.130-132, by W.R. Davidge.
30. The work of the Midlands J.T.P.C. was discussed by Humphries, H.H., The Midlands Joint Town Planning Advisory Council, in Journal of the Town Planning Institute, Vol. XIII, November, 1926, pp.22-33.
31. The text of the petition, The Development of London and the Home Counties. The Need for a Comprehensive Plan, was reproduced in the Journal of the Town Planning Institute, Vol. XII, April, 1926, pp.146-150.
32. First Report of the Greater London Regional Planning Committee (1929), Second Report (1933)
33. Ministry of Health, Annual Report, 1924/25 op.cit.
34. Ministry of Health, Annual Report, 1932/32 op.cit.
35. Ibid.